

The First of the Dragon Riders

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Summary: Hiccup was desperate, and all he needed was a chance. Just one chance, and when he befriends Toothless out of estranged empathy, he ends up caught in the nets of a war. Vikings or dragons, Hiccup will be forced to choose, and it may be his end. First-person. Expanded (alternate) universe. Deviates from (the first) movie. An attempt at fluently interconnecting the two HTTYD movies.

1. The Isle

****The First of the Dragon Riders****

* * *

><p>The Isle

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><p>It was just any other day, just any other, and it was because of my utter foolhardiness did I even attempt in doing the least likely thing that would ever happen â€" and succeeded. I was just nothing but a lowly, infamous, downcast that could barely do anything "useful," usually hanging by myself in the woods, messing around with a vain cause to bring down the beasts that constantly raid our home.

Literally. _Hiccup. _Such name would definitely spring questions to newcomers' minds. Just a mention of my name, and I swear, they'd breathe under their nose, with the inevitable need to concern made visible through the raising of eyebrows:

"Yeah, what does he do? Hiccup every thirty seconds?"

If that was the question one was asking, I would probably agree...(or not, depending on the contextual definition of "hiccup").

That was what I was. A hiccup. Living up to my name. _Hiccup._

* * *

><p>The Isle of Berk. My home.<p>

Stationed in the middle of a barren sea, whose waves would crush boats and drive fear even into the biggest of sea creatures. Like towers, our island was one of the many that formed a chain, ascending over the restless water like unbroken statues of the gods themselves. Marking its border were isolated columns of rock, carved to be humungous ferocious Vikings, breathing fire and fear into all those who would pass. Buildings dotted the landscape, all with curved, tiled roofs and wooden walls and doors of dull, brown colors, while a complex system of catwalks and stairs laid pathways to all over the town. The main hall, in which all meet and gather, was dug into the mountainside, where huge, carved and decorated doors draped with man's greatest feats in history acted as fearsome soldiers, dictating who would enter or not.

Like its home, so are its men.

Us Vikings and our majestic stubbornness. Our pride was the one that made us stay here, and, hell, no one is complaining about living in such freezing _paradise_. I sometimes wonder if we ever thought of leaving at all. Our stature, our physical appearance would burn through the souls of a flower with one, deep glare. Our ways around a sword, matched like no other. We all wore fur, bland clothing, at least most of us did, and we walk around with an undeniable, unbreakable sense of self-dignity.

Like its men, so are its neighbors.

The very _hospitable, caring_ neighbors. Whereas we had our own island, they had theirs; a humongous, ruling mountain of untold secrets, where not even eyes can set upon its peak for the thickest bank of fog were hired to stand guard. Impenetrable, according to the legends.

Those godsdamned _dragons._

_Yeah, dragons. _They weren't a myth. And they still haunt my mind even if you can't find a damned clue of them having existed on this forsaken earth.

Regardless of where they lived, they were scattered across the islands, traveling in-between them, flying through the vast distances that kept the other tribes apart from us. Every once in a while, a minor fleet of them would just drift by the town. Immediately, entire heads would pop off and yell in extreme worry.

Here's how the daily routine went:

"DRAGONS!"

Then the entire town would arm themselves and ready catapults and what not, only to find that _they were just passing by._ There were a couple times when even a bunch of _snotty _kids would point at the sky and yell, "DRAGONS!" And when everyone stormed out of their homes with axes and swords in hands, raised to the thumping beat of their

monstrous legs and chanting war cries...there would be some sort of gaping jaw and "I can't believe I fell for that" muttering that appeared on every face.

I can't blame them, really. It was a dragon's reputation to burn a couple of homes, chew someone's limbs off, and call it a day. It was probably natural for any human being, even a Viking, to arm themselves in an instant. Or...or it may just that be pride/arrogance issue as mentioned prior. The dare to yell out: "Come at me ye stew-pit fiends!" Perhaps that's why the other tribes never left too, even though anything I've ever known from them were history lessons from drunk adults or the ignorant, aggressive behavior of traders who would come by every once in a couple thousand years, boasting about the superiority of their town.

That's right, _other _tribes. We weren't the only idiots who wanted to stay. Not only that, we remained separate from them, for reasons unknown. "Strength in numbers"? Yeah, such an idea never existed. Again, arrogance and pride. Occasionally, they'd _actually _visit, not just any of their crews manning a trading ship. And there was one specific occasion that _might actually _mark the beginning of all this chaos that occurred in my life.

The day, which was one of those rare times they actually visited, the other Vikings exiled the Isle of Berk from their fine coalition also happened to be the day in which, for me, everything else began to change.

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><p>I stood outside the main hall doors, lying against the humongous support that lifted the ceiling of the door from the ground, my arms folded, and the only noises were the suppressed babbling of men and the faint beating of my heart; aside from the other kids here were the other kids, of course, who were standing restlessly behind me, wanting a look and not keeping quiet about it. Left to right they came, sort of grouped around a little hole in the door that everyone would peek into:<p>

Snotlout, Ruffnut, Tuffnut, Fishlegs, and _Astrid._

I would bite my lips in the way I pronounced _her _name; it was just _marvelous _in an incomprehensible kind of way...

Her personality had _death _written all over it â€" spiked dress, an almost demonic styled shoulder plate, a metal-branded headband-thing, a _skull belt_ for the gods' sake! And her flush, blonde hair would drape and cover one of her eyes half the time; she always acted with that attitude that made her so hard to get-

_Who am I kidding? _I thought. It was almost impossible to even get her _talk _to me; besides, there were other things for me to worry about, being the Chief's son and all. Like listen to my father's complaint about not being invited to certain meetings concerning tribes dotting the entire northern domain.

Then there was Snotlout, the sort of buffy-boy of the town, flexing his arms in front of all the other kids to make a complete fool of himself. He had prey, obviously, and he'd usually come after me, attacking me with words, perhaps a punch or two, ending with a mean

shove. He always wore this devilish grin on his face, and he'd just look at anyone with complete annoyance as if he doesn't get along with anyone. He always wore this helmet that I've almost never seen him take off. It bothered me slightly.

At the time, I never any idea of the origin of our hostilities. He just naturally hates me. However, the circumstance can be related to back when my father and Snotlout's were rivals, when they were approximately the same age as we were. They were somewhat equally matched in everything, and for each win, they'd value; each loss they'd greatly sneer at and hope to avenge for. In competitions, the town would always be anticipating for the battle between the Honorable Stoick and the Ferocious Spitelout. Then things settled down for them two as the matured, and even became my father's advisor. Maybe even friends, though I have never seen the laugh together or drink together, the same way my father does with Gobber. Perhaps they're just in a very boring friendship?

Anyways, I highly doubt the relationship between the both of us would lessen in tension. It's possibly because of his maturity. And the way he behaves to other people.

"Get the hell out of my way!" he scowled at me as if I were merely an irritating pest, pushing me aside as he took time to reside beside the twins, who were constantly elbowing each other in the attempt to dominate more space than their twin.

The twins " continuously fighting without end. They both had long, blond hair that draped along their sides; their crooked-horned helmets would serve as a needed protection to keep their heads safe from their ever-occurring quarrels, as they'd always bang their heads against each other in a vain attempt to end with their dominance. And, rather like Snotlout, they'd direct insults at me, but not specifically; everyone they got their hands on were their targets. Just axes for brains.

Fishlegs observed them with a frown on his face, knowing that there was no way for them to squeeze through. He was a rather chubby person, towering somewhat over the rest of the kids. Regardless of his size, his little, squeaky voice made him even more prominent among the rest. He had this tendency to be over-cautious about everything, and he shared this remarkable love for dragons " or knowledge of them. In any conversation, if he was able to, he'd start babbling on about those unholy beasts.

"Hey guys?" he inquired. "Shouldn't we _not _be peeking inside?"

"Oh, go home!" Snotlout replied, not even looking back at his peer.

Astrid eyed them all with a sense of discontent, and decided to join the group of curious teens in order to see what the hell was going on.

Having been ignorantly shoved aside, I wandered about on the ground before the main hall, circling pointlessly. It was only then did my eyes trace to find a slight gap in between the two doors " they have not been fully closed.

I glanced back at the group of kids that were fighting over vision-rights before cautiously sneaking my way over to the little creak that, I knew, would give me a complete, enjoyable view of the entire scene.

"Enough!" I heard a man bellow, the voice being all too recognizable. The chatter amongst the enticed crowd settled into a state of tranquility, allowing to spread my father's thoughts freely.

I broke free from my resting position and approached the little creak through the slightly opened door, leaking a streak of candlelight into the dark night. I poked my eyes in between the two doors and tried my best to maintain a clear view of the events that occurred inside, doing my best to avoid looking successful in my attempts to spy on my father so that the others wouldn't come invade my golden spot.

My father was on a table, using it as an improvised stand. He was walking back and forth, his arms holding each other in front of him, resting against his fairly large stomach. His mouth opened again, only to be cut off instantly.

He was the Chief, and had one hell of a character to represent it. He had a great, mighty beard that ran down from his face, big enough to hide someone's infant from danger. He had big, burly arms that had the ability to pick up and move the entire island elsewhere. He would dress himself in this majestic fur cape, which would follow him wherever he went, and his voice would seem as if it boomed when in fact he just gave a mere whisper. And whenever he speaks, there was purpose to it. Even if he said something as pointless as "I hate dragons," which was an obvious fact, people would have this tendency to stand and clap in agreement, admiring the wise words he had sputtered out.

But not all the time. Not in this situation.

"I-!"

"Enough!?" one of the other tribe leaders cried radically, "Enough!?"

He jumped up onto the table to confront my father, and having sounded angrily enough, my father allowed the listener's attention to turn to him. The man straightened his posture and threw aside an empty cup of what was once ale inside.

"The Chief Olrik of the Berserkers," my father greeted, slightly bowing his head in gratitude.

My mind quickly recalled the rather familiar character. This chief would perform trade between our tribes himself, so it was a common sight to see him just wandering around town, gathering eyes of lads and old friends.

"Chief Stoick the Vast," he nodded back, whirling around afterward to speak to the people.

"Stoick - a brave man, isn't he?" he started off with a chuckle, throwing his arms in delight. The rest of the men erupted in agreement, nodding their heads and raising their enormous jugs of brew into the air, sloshing around and making an entirely sloppy

mess.

"You know, we've fought together. Against the Outcasts and the so-called Mad King. Against the dragons in the Battle of the Hysteria."

He lowered his voice down to a mutter, "May the gods spare their forsaken souls."

He then brightened up his mood as he resumed his little announcement.

"But we've also fought against each other. When we were nothing but mere teens. The tribal wars and such, you know..." he rolled his hands in a gesture that meant the audience was supposed to know what he was saying.

"...and we weren't really formidable enemies either. Instead, we did a lot of things together...a lot."

A quick glance at my father, which even forced him to manage a smile, indirectly recalling the memories, that I supposed, they had together.

The entire crowd threw up a sound of laughter, understanding the purpose in the emphasis of the Chief Olrik's last two words.

"We fought against each other because every one of us blamed another for the downfall of our once standing Kingdom. Then we questioned. We realized. We thought we could escape that wretched king's grasp and live entirely on our own. And we did, we packed all our things and left. Then we found our homes, formed the tribes. Created an ideal that we all could agree on, one that proved to be infallible. We were all happy and relatively fat, raising mugs and what-not...well, of course, there were dragons."

The crowd took the time to realize the flaw in this paradise of theirs and laugh at their mistake, with a few chuckles appearing here and there.

"But that did not stop us. Neither did the King. Because of our toil. Because of all we have done. And we were willing to give away anything to keep this coalition intact. And now, it's time we have to give away again. To sacrifice for the well-being of...the majority."

The Chief's words seemed to deviate from its original, humorous tone, and begin to sound darker and undelightful.

I noticed my father's broad grin slowly faded, and the warriors of the Berk begin to an uproar.

However, I did not understand what was happening. It seemed all too disconnected and random.

"I'm sorry to say this, Stoick," the Chief Olrik's spread-wide smile now turning into a grim simper, "But, I think we'll have to fight each other again."

"Wait, what!?" my father exclaimed.

"As of today, the rest of the council has decided to exile the Isle of Berk, commonly known as the Hooligans, from the coalition."

The entire hall came to a standstill, and only my father's voice shook the columns and pillars. The kids alongside me rose their voices slightly, questioning with the same bewilderment as my father had sounded his.

"What!?" Snotlout shot.

"Why are they doing this?" Tuffnut asked.

"You can't do this!" Stoick scowled.

"Stoick, calm down-"

My father held his hands out in front of him, in a sort of begging-like manner, but was far too superior as a man to be in such a mood.

"Olrik, we've been through so much together, and-"

"Which is every reason why I'm doing this for you!"

My father dropped his hands in misunderstanding.

"Excuse me?" my father squinted his eyes, interrogating his counterpart with an aggressive approach.

The fact that this entire scene was displayed in front the entirety of the coalition's men and representatives humiliated both Chiefs, but my father wasn't one to care. Chief Olrik gave his dear ally a glare that postponed their discussions for later.

"Get the ships ready; we're leaving soon," Chief Olrik announced.

The noise of entire audience grew in to bickering clamor, and turmoil ensued across the entire hall; fists were raised and shaken angrily in the flickering candlelight and empty beer tankards clunked hollowly against one another in the hands of the bustling Vikings.

"Oh! They're coming!" Fishlegs viciously whispered in fear, running away behind a bush.

"Go! Get out of here! We're not supposed to be here!" Astrid demanded.

I quickly retreated back to a secluded area, one hidden behind the pillar, and watched as the other kids departed and scattered across the entire town, oblivious to the fact that I had not run away along with them.

The scuffling of the last remaining men sounded distantly and grew ever more as my father and his ally walked behind the doors that they subtly slam shut, creating a soft, thundering noise of wood pounding against more wood.

The sound was distinct enough to take me up from my half-slumber behind the humongous entrance pillar. I slightly poked my ear out to eavesdrop on my father, listening to their scheming, or whatever it is that honorable leaders do.

"Word has gone out that mainland has their shit together," Chief Olrik began, "and you know what they were looking for, previously, when they were not tearing at each other's limbs."

My father folded his arms angrily, finding no response to such a statement as he regurgitated and swallowed back unspoken words.

"I-" he tried.

"Seeing that your town has been well-known for your..." he trailed off, gesturing in a you-know manner, and resumed speaking as if my father understood what he was speaking of, "...so I don't want the-"

_The what? _my mind asked.

The pause was sudden, and my mind wasn't even close to remotely comprehending the conversation the two were having.

My father held up his hands and stopped his friend from talking anymore, saying, "I know, I know."

They stood awkwardly across from each other, not having said anything anymore. They waited a few more seconds before Chief Olrik asked, "How's Gobber?"

"Oh, that fat old clunk?" my father chuckled, "Great as ever. He's on a lil' hunting trip right now."

"Right. How are his arms and legs?"

"Nothing but gears and pieces," my father smirked, "But it's been working well for him. He's never been the free-loader."

Another alienated lull that had erupted from nowhere and I waited for another word to be said, not even having understood anything they were saying.

"I'm sorry for Valka," Chief Olrik started again.

My father grumbled angrily, "Yeah, heard it a thousand times." A subtle grin appeared on his face as he looked up from the ground and at Chief Olrik.

"I'm sorry, yeah. You're right."

Silence, again.

It would be a while before my father replied, "Thanks," holding out his hand, wanting a firm shake.

An understanding, mutual nod, a response to my father's offer, and Chief Olrik left the premises.

My father remained still, decorating his face with an obvious state

of disappointment. I watched him shamefully, knowing that it was _my _father I was looking at, and quietly departed into the trees that were nearby the main hall entrances.

* * *

><p>The bells echoed throughout the forest and into my ears as they rang their farewells to the restless visitors. I couldn't be happier to know that Chief Olrik was leaving. He never truly met me, and if he found out that I were nothing but a stick, my father would get embarrassed.<p>

By hiding, I was doing my father a _true _favor.

My mind didn't care for the events that had taken place and decided that it was best I resumed my former whereabouts.

Berk exiled from a coalition? So what?

I groaned in a hunched-over position, gracefully laying down a dragon trap I had designed and built myself.

That's right â€" I was a smith's worker, working under the apprenticeship of my father's right-hand-man, Gobber. Right-hand-man, _literally. _He had lost his left arm and right foot to a dragon, and now they were replaced with interchangeable wood and steel.

He's nothing but gears and pieces, yet he's even more worthwhile than I am. Viking's most ingenious man to ever have lived on the Isle, thinking of the most impractical, but most intelligible, solutions to almost every problem.

He's the piece that helped my father hold Berk together.

Anyways, I continued marching over dead leaves and strayed branches, following the small map I held in my diary-booklet-thing. I have no idea what my book is, exatly. It had entries, as a diary would, but it would skip entire pages and in those pages marooned by the entries' lack of presence, there would be designs of machines, specifically made for killing a dragon.

Being the weak, most useless kid in the entirety of the Isle, I had to resort to such complex intricacies of engineering, the ones that only _so few_, if not Gobber only, could understand. Everyone at home was just basically a war-mongering brute who swings before he thinks. I was glad that my father wasn't exactly _that._

I began crossing out locations on the map that I had visited, bending over again to reconfigure yet other traps that I had laid on my path to my destination. It looks like that I had everything planned, that I was assuring my success, but my enthusiasm for redemption was what made me fail.

I remembered one of my traps, having caught Snotlout's arm. It bit him, getting its teeth deep under the skin and into the flesh. Upon hearing the noise, I was somewhat happy, never having really liked Snotlout, but I was also quite depressed, knowing that my father would come storming into my room, warning about my lack of caution.

Regardless, I was actually a lost child. I have nothing to do, nobody "loves" me, and my father doesn't qualify. And the only things that actually accompanied me were the _rocks_ and _trees_. The best, most definitive definition of a loner, if I say so myself.

Killing a dragon means everything around here nowadays. It's your reputation. Have I made a scratch in one's skin, life would have been a helluvalot better. Maybe people could've trusted my abilities to help me to become the next acting chief.

Yeah, _me, _a _chief? _Even I scoff at such prospect.

I bent over, yet again, working with the delicate mechanisms of another sudden, well-hidden trap. I was tying knots on a rope, stringing the gears of a complex system of unnecessary machinery, all to promote the element of surprise.

I kneeled back, letting myself to rest as I admired my handy-work, the one that know one will ever hear or see. I clapped the dust of my hands, congratulating myself in utter silence. I let loose a deliberate sigh, laying my hands on my knees as I thought of what to do next.

I began throwing dirt all over my piece of artwork, thrashing at it with hatred and disgust, abhorring the finalization of my intensively planned trap. I knew that it couldn't work; it was missing a piece.

"Bull...!" I grabbed the trap and smashed it against the ground, invading my need to unnecessarily curse.

I stared it with frustration, grunting and knowing that the amount of time I had put into it was meaningless now. The trap, too, was now hollow, and there was always one rule when it comes to inconsequential objects: dispose of it. Don't even both wasting anymore time.

I grabbed the broken pieces of the ploy and stood, charging towards the edge of the cliff. I stopped at the fringe and chucked the apparatus, as a whole, out into the water, which eagerly consumed it. The crashing of waves and the noisy breeze made the paltry splash almost moderate. It was only reduced to a distant noise.

Nothing but useless gears and pieces. I looked at the ground around and beneath my feet, and took notice of one peculiar object. It shined dimly, the dirt having dulled its reflective surfaces. I bent over and picked it up for a closer, more extensive observation.

It was a missing gear piece that had rendered my machine unusable.

_Are you serious!? _my mind raged.

I kept it regardless, knowing that, sometimes, the useless things in life later become the ones most needed.

There's always that one idle object that you seem to have to keep. For whatever reason, the gear in my hand was that thing.

I calmed myself down, easing my heavy, unstable breathing into a

lower-key state. I clumsily sat myself down against the cold, dirt floor, the canvas of the cliff having a lack of decor sod.

There was no one for me to resort to, when I felt guilty, shameful, angry, sad. The other kids in this town knew me then as an outcast, and any attempt to contact the domestic peoples would be rendered pointless. Well, this was already discussed. A loner is what he is.

I watched the sunset as its majestic crimson rays slowly cowered behind the ocean surface. I sat still, admiring nature's beauty and unification of all that we hold insignificant: the ocean, the birds, the breeze, the rocks.

Amongst the voices of nature, I heard the bells ring. Above the trees, the yelling of men could be heard. They bellowed one word which instantly elicited an excited response, rippling through my flesh and bones. I grinned at their chant: "Dragons!"

I immediately ran back towards the village; the first things in the sky I saw, diving downwards with its gaping mouth storming fire onto the houses below, were our sworn enemies. The ones that I had waited so long to kill; I had many chances not-so-recently in the past, and yet I remained patient. My perseverance will not prevail any longer.

A newcomer, though such a person is rare on our isolated archipelago, would suffer from "shock," as if the gods had brought about the end of the world, and they were left to witness the entirety of it. To hell with shock, actually; if such a scrawny kid such as myself could survive the oncoming raid of dragons, then I'm pretty sure _anyone could._

I muttered to myself, complaining at the fact that this raid was going to be just like any other, with me, failing to prove myself worthy, humiliating myself in the process.

* * *

><p>I ran past the humongous figures of my town, all of them yelling at me, "Stay inside!" Their bellowing did not shatter my poise at opportunity. I knew I had purpose in the smithy, and I was willing to fulfill it.<p>

Chaos ensued, but, over the course of our "war," we had formed strategic plans that helped keep the town from being destroyed. Always light up the sky and keep track of numbers. How many were we facing; how many were already dead. Statistics upon statistics. And warmongering craze. The giant torches were already lit, and, along with the blazing houses, it brightened the sky and the underbellies of dozens of demons.

The catapults built on the edges of the town were being manned. The clicking and clacking of their complex mechanisms sounded among the yelling of excited men. They twisted and turned, the arm being pulled back in hopes of reloading before being noticed. Big, burly rocks were loaded onto the catapults' spoon-shaped end, and they finally let go a fatal shot, one that completely missed its target. But this was not unusual; these demons who raised us for many nights of the year were so agile they could easily evade a cumbersome boulder, if

they could see it coming.

My father took a survey of the dragons - I heard him when I entered the smithy. He observed the skies, not paying attention to the men around him.

"Dragon count?" he asked.

"Gronckles, Nadders, even a Nightmare!" someone reported, a relatively small figure.

My father acknowledged him with a great, single nod, and turned back to face the brutes unleashing havoc among the townsfolk.

His broad and wide figure were visually dominating the others. He was an admiring figure, and just by looking at him, you knew that respect must be paid. Others may describe him as frightening.

He never worried for any dragon; he had virtually no fear for them. Put him against any dragon, and he'd never blink, he'd never run. However, he feared the unknown, the deadly, the silent. Only one dragon matched this mysterious description, and my father attuned the same fear to this dragon which he did to defeat

A Night Fury, they called it.

It was fast, and it remains unseen. It never showed itself. It shoots lightning, practically. And it never missed. Rarely did it roar. But, hell, it strikes fear into both men and women.

As long as the count does not include one of them, losses and damage would remain minimal. It was statistically proven. Literally, it was thought that the Night Fury itself would be enough to destroy the town, but the job was never finished.

No one in their rightful mind would go after the Night Fury. Especially me; especially me.

That's why I aim to do so.

Damn, wasn't I quite unfortunate to be kept under surveillance by the entirety of the town.

"Your father gave me explicit orders to keep you inside when there's an attack," I remembered Gobber telling me.

I was already fueling the heat in the forge as I continued to think about disobeying my father. It was tempting, but it was most likely that I'd just cause another disaster.

Gobber didn't even look at me. But he knew I was there, and interrupted my thoughts as he began throwing around orders, greeting me as he would a friend as he does so.

"Hey, nice to see you've come for the party!"

Gobber's light-hearted mood never seem to drain from his face - it was always there.

"Thought you've been carried off," he added.

"I'm way too important," I said sarcastically, "Manning the station and handing people what they need." I flexed my arms to reveal the blob of meat I wanted to call muscle and found that Gobber wasn't, at all, impressed.

"Well, they need toothpicks, don't they?" Gobber answered with a devious smirk.

"Ha. Ha," I laughed with a monotonous voice.

"Get the swords and melt them somewhat," he said, tossing aside some extremely mutilated equipment.

I got right to it, still focusing on pumping air into the forge. My scrawny body and lack of muscle made it difficult to even lift with both arms one of the axes which my father could pick up with a thumb and forefinger - the giant bellows that kept the fire searingly hot were almost impossible to operate, but I persevered.

Yet, I still wanted to disobey. I watched in shame and with jealousy as the other kids were busy taking out fires, and even by doing their job, their chances of bringing down a dragon were a thousand times better than mine. Jealous because I'd never get the opportunities as they did. Shameful because my physical appearance and capabilities cursed me to remain a lonely outcast for the remainder of my days on Berk.

I hopped from one desk to another, continued manning the station, using a grindstone to reshape the severely bent sword.

Suddenly, in the middle of my work, I was deafened by a sudden boom. Others were crouching or on their backs, cowering or downed from the bellow of a monster's breath. A Night Fury's breath. I could hear its shriek as it passed by overhead. I rose up from behind the counter, only to see the burning remnants of a catapult.

My father's eyes were filled with fear, _his fear, _a scent so seldom excreted that a sign of it was just an omen: _things weren't going to turn out so well._ I could see his face from a distance. He looked desperate, blankly staring at the shattered remains of our torn-down defenses, and shivered deliberately as he began shouting out orders.

"Gobber, take a group of men down to the lower defenses and secure the debris! Keep it from burning! I'll lead the rest to protecting the main hall." Gobber nodded in agreement. I was amazed to find out that my father still kept a tactical survey of the situation regardless of his terrified state. My father shot a look at me, then back at Gobber.

"Tell the kids to stay inside the main hall."

Gobber gave me an understandable look.

You know where you should go.

I nodded subtly, _You can trust me!_

Gobber, hoping that I would obey his commands, ran to battle with his

familiar war cry.

I looked about the smithy, noticing the lack of customers waiting for their weapons. I quickly grabbed my "net-shooter," though I had a name for it, a _ballista, _and ran out the doorway.

I remember Gobber remarking about my creation - "A bow's useless without an arrow."

I shrugged it off my mind, and continued shoving the cart gracefully along the bump-stricken pathway.

I knew where to go. I certainly did.

* * *

><p>Gobber was gone, had already assembled a group of men to perform my father's will. The rest of the town grouped by the main hall; the others had already taken shelter there. With no one watching, I discreetly ran away, dragging along the over-sized bow, kindly tucked in a tow-able cart that Gobber had so kindly kept in storage for me.<p>

The sounds of roaring and yelling, and the smells of smoke, and sweat still filled the air. I have already planned a spot to shoot from; I have been observing the Night Fury's bombing paths, and so I headed towards the cliff that bordered land from sea, the one and only place close enough to the sea but far enough from town to avoid disturbances. I swerved in and out pathways, dodging wells, entire houses, people, all in a reckless attempt in redemption. The wooden wheels near my feet rolled violently, thudding and bumping at the joints of the uneven boardwalks that I ran on top of.

I took the one and only exit out of town: the back town walls. Into the forest I ran, and the packed dirt pathway, which was dimly lit by the full moon's radiance and the distant fires of death, was towered over by trees, running parallel to the ocean. I veered forcibly to my left and off the pathway, running towards the edge of the cliff that ran aside my former passage.

I hurried, and settled myself, navigating through an intricate system of gears that clicked! and clacked!, unlocking the humongous, larger-scaled mechanical crossbow.

Snap!

It unfolded itself, and I took a step back as I marveled at the amazing elaborateness of my machine. I approached my creation and grabbed it by the handles, bowing my head towards the sights that I had attached to the bow, enhancing my senses to spot the malevolent fury, and disregard all other noises and sights.

There was all but nothing. Nothing but silence; nothing to be seen. I heard my own breath; I saw nothing but stars. The constant chirping of the crickets rose tensions a bit more

"Black as night, silent as death, vile as the devil," I whispered.

I wasn't ready to cower from what others did. I only feared for what would happen if I didn't. Tried, at least. The skies ahead remained

empty, and my heart sparked with renewed fortitude.

A sudden screech, and the flapping of wings.

I saw it.

The sky was brightening now, the sun ready to emerge and bring peace upon this town once again. First mistake. The Night Fury never stays until dawn, and, for whatever reason, I noticed its change in behavior.

Now the horrifying figure was visible, only slightly, and I took aim with accuracy measured to the best of my abilities.

Too focused on my target, I tripped on an innocent rock as I moved around, lugging the shooter from side to side.

It was because of my lack of balance did I accidentally let loose the bolas, now streaming towards a virtually invisible target. Without aiming, the fate of the bolas was already determined. I shamefully look at the flying object for a second, knowing that it wouldn't hit anything.

Until it did.

It wrapped around what seemed to be a torso, the wings tangled with the complex netting-like pattern the bolas was meant to create. Without its wings, the dragon went down.

I was both confused and amazed. Calculations went on in my mind, and I knew it was with sheer luck that I had hit the dragon. Regardless, I gave myself full credit.

I did it.

The creature roared as it set course to crash behind the mountains that conveniently obscured my view.

No one would be able to see it, especially with everything they were occupied with. So my celebration was intimate and isolated, and I threw a fist in the air as I jumped around to face opposite of the cliff.

"Did anybody see that...!?"

My silent and personal celebration was quickly interrupted as I heard a deep growl from behind.

A Nightmare, known for its need to set itself ablaze and its ferocity in battle. Two horns struck out of its head; two teeth doing the same from its lower jaw. It hung on the cliff, having climbed it in what seemed to be a desperate attempt to surprise me. I silently cursed to myself for not having noticed the commotion that must've been caused by the Nightmare's scuttling, but there was no time.

My primal instincts took over, and I forced my feet to power my way back into the forest's trees, towards the town.

I yelled aloud, hoping that I would be able to grab help's attention and have it come to me. I clumsily ran towards the town walls,

stumbling upon rocks and roots of trees.

"Oh gods!" I cried.

The dragon, regardless of my speed given to me by my slenderness, remained glued behind me on the dirt path I followed; the dirt ground was immediately stomped on and ruined by the Nightmare; the trees that occupied its space were later crushed violently, bowing to snap like mere twigs to the dragon's horrendous strength. It was only in the last few lengths' worth was I then caught by my superior. Outmatched by nature's design, I was pinned down at the town's edge, at the very line that marked civilization from nature.

I turned around to find myself standing a finger's width away from the dragon's repugnant face, snorting at me as if it were laughing at my frailty

My father, who was fighting off dragons along with the rest of the town, turned his attention towards me. His sharp eyes detected my need for help, making out the familiar, mundane figure that turned out to be his very own son. His reflexes were unparalleled, and his mind instantly set a new agenda, prioritizing this new one over others.

He called out my name as he charged towards the Nightmare.

"Hiccup!" That was my father's war cry, usually one that neither him nor I were fond of.

I bored into the Nightmare's eyes as it opened its mouth, its disgusting saliva splattering all over my face, its throat lit up by its fire-bearing lungs. Despite all the loathsome things I smelled and felt, my body couldn't give a damn. The dragon heaved into my face, then it readied to scorch the entirety of it into ash.

'Twas a merciless creature.

The dragon was stalled, unfortunately. A spear flew into the dragon's torso, the force driven behind it being able to knock the Nightmare off its feet. It wasn't enough to penetrate its armor, but it was enough for my father to get my dragon's attention.

With a warhammer in hand, my father approached and pounded the devilish beast over and over. But the Nightmare refused to step down.

I didn't hesitate to help my father. I grabbed a dagger, conveniently lying on the ground, scattered by the battle, and ran towards the dragon, with the dagger positioned in a manner meant to kill. But the dragon had keen peripheral vision, saw me from behind, and knocked me on my back. The dragon did not fight with my father any longer, for my father was knocked down and was recuperating; the dragon's willing to fulfill my death.

I grabbed an ax and swung blindly, missing the dragon entirely, and hitting the neck of a town's torch. The dragon continued to steadily approach me, and I crawled back up to the town walls. It understood I was no threat, that I was a laughable contender in this struggle for survival. I hid behind the torch's neck as the dragon blew its hellish breath.

The ax and the fiery breath weakened the torch's neck enough for it to come crashing down next to my father, who luckily stumbled out of the way in time to prevent himself from being crushed.

The dragon, distracted by the falling of the humongous structure, looked elsewhere. I threw myself upon the beast, hoping to put it into submission. But I was a fool. It shook itself and threw me against the town walls, once again, and approached me slowly. My back ached, disabling me from performing any sort of taunt or defensive move.

It didn't matter; I was in no physical condition to be able to have my defensive capabilities equate to that of the dragon's fearsome strength. Again, it gaped open its mouth, and again, I saw the hell inside stirring to be unleashed.

A spear was thrown once again, coming out of nowhere and interrupting my destiny, into the eyes of the beast. Its blood spilled all over me and my surroundings. It roared in agony, and, before my father could do any more, it stumbled and fled, the spear protruding outwards, making the Nightmare an unrecognizable figure from afar.

I watched the rounded end of the torch bulldoze its way through houses and buildings before rolling off the docks and crashing into the sea below. The herds of sheep, the shepherd leading them towards the main hall, scattered. Those left astray were to be picked up later by the dragons who were beginning to depart.

* * *

><p>The morning peeked its head into the dimly lit sky, revealing the outlines of fleeing beasts making their way out to the open sea. In the claws of about half of them, doomed, mutilated sheep were squealing in fear.<p>

Realizing what I had done, my father glared at me for a moment. I looked down in shame, refusing to initiate eye-contact with him.

Without turning, I knew that his eyes were burning angrily.

"You know what the hell could've happened to you?"

I kept silent.

My father went back to watching the skies, cursing at the dragons, daring that the demons to return for another round

"Stoick," Gobber approached my father, "No casualties, ten wounded."

The after-battle report. It was always never about the amount of damage dealt by the dragons. Just the number of men and food.

"Four of seven herds were safely kept in the main hall during the attack." My father was grateful for the survival of the townsfolk. But he was still angry.

"Three herds of sheep, lost because of your godsdamn doing!"

My father's bellow caught the attention of the whole town. While people still worked here and there, I noticed that the majority of their eyes were on us.

It wasn't my fault.

I remained petrified by his sudden rise in vocals, ashamed to have such a lecture in front of so many people. Ashamed because this was probably the millionth time it happened.

I was ready to say something, willing to talk back at my father. Something so utterly foolish and irrelevant, it would only embarrass my father and myself even further.

"Uh...yeah. But I hit a...a Night Fury." I just spat out, my eyes widened as it searched for judgmental figures. My eyes looked at random faces, watching them discern me as I stood awkwardly in front of an unneeded audience.

My father gave me a stare, one of complete disbelief, and let out a long sigh, then a scoff. He held out his arms, as if he were going to embrace me, but he stood still, like a statue, before shoving me away from him and dismissing me from his sights.

"Just go home, Hiccup. We'll talk this over, later."

He gestured Gobber to escort me back home, and I shamefully started making my way back even before my entourage would accompany me.

The whole town watched me as I left the square. The kids stood there, most of them mocking me, throwing faces of both farcity and shame. All but _Astrid_. _I then stared disappointingly down at my feet and studied them as I let everyone's eyes tear my soul apart.

Morning broke, and the battle was over. The sun gleamed from above the sea and greeted us with its warmth and heat. Even in its presence, I did not feel comfort.

* * *

><p>We were right at the entrance when Gobber decided to give me a concise lecture on self-acceptance, one that I didn't take too kindly.<p>

"Yer father's right. Hiccup, look, if you listen to him, you wouldn't be embarrassing yourself so often."

I sighed and dropped my shoulders, having heard enough of the same old news over and over again.

"You don't have to try so hard to be one of us. Just act like yourself," he said encouragingly.

I took a rather long pause before I whirled around, keeping calm in the process, and slowly spoke to Gobber with sorrowful eyes:

"That's all I ever want to be, one of you guys."

* * *

><p>I was at home, sitting in front of the fire as I watched it boil my afternoon meal. I remained motionless the entire time, pondering upon my imagination, thinking about other instances in life where I had messed up. My father pushed open the creaking door and entered the common room to join me. He took a brief moment of silence before eventually speaking to me.<p>

"I have a whole town to feed, Hiccup."

I nodded with understanding. I knew the responsibilities of the chief. But _to feed the town? _I would look around and see about _ninety-nine percent _of people with bellies flooding their pants.

"So why can't you just obey my orders? Make it easier for yourself. For me." It was then and there did I disagree.

He was wrong.

"For myself?" I silently asked. My voice grew louder as it progressed through the sentence. "If I were to stay inside, I'd be nothing but a pet, consuming your food and wasting your space! You know how the hell that feels?"

My father had no response to my argument, and responded with a noticeable sigh. My father understood the point, and decided to skip the topic. He seemed eager that I'd like what he was about to say to me.

"I've decided to hold a town meeting, soon, debating on whether we should attack the dragon's homeland or to leave it be and continue enduring their attacks."

I continued staring at him and nodded.

"I expect the majority of the town to be agreeing with me, attacking the dragon's nest," he lifted his eyes towards me, "and I expect you to be on your best behavior."

I was mute, not knowing whether to say anything or not.

"Training is coming in a few days. I've asked Gobber to have you in."

I questioned him, "Wh- what?" I scoffed then scratched my head, baffled by such unexpected announcement. Was I supposed to be thankful? To remain silent? To curse at my father and reject his favor? My mind was completely indecisive.

I was utterly confused. My father was no fool, and knowing me, he'd least likely want me to get myself killed in the arena.

"I don't want you killed, I know."

See?

"But you seem to have a strong thirst for dragon blood, so we're willing to put that determination to use."

"Right, and by doing so, the thing you want not to occur will proceed to happen," I whirled around, almost sarcastically clapping my hands in disrespect, but I dropped my arms, knowing that it wouldn't help my situation any further. My flare of contempt in my offensive statement was already enough.

I turned around again with a worrying, inquiring frown.

"Gobber talked you into this, didn't he?" I asked.

He sighed before submitting to my accusations with a nod, opening the pot and pouring out its contents so that we might begin our meal. I wasn't exactly fond of the news, thought knowing my father wanted to give me purpose other than to wreck havoc among the townsfolk. But the other kids, they'd just humiliate me.

* * *

><p>Evening fell once again, and the entire town met up at the main hall, as my father had told me he would summon.<p>

I remained hidden, off the town's borders, preferring to be alone. Gazing at the stars never got old for me; it expanded my perception of everything. A boost of intellect, as one may say.

Unluckily, the town was still haunted by drunks, those who were too tipsy from their unquenchable craving for alcohol. One happened to stumble over to my location. He recognized who I was, but ignored the fact that I was me, and began a conversation anyways. He settled himself down by my side and broke my train of thought with a hateful voice and coughing breath.

"Hey."

I am not one meaning to disrespect, so I just continued along.

"Hey."

"Are ye goin' te dragon trainin'?"

How godsdamn convenient, I thought. He obviously never heard my father and I speak of training. Godsdamned drunks. The guy obviously presumed I was going to say yes as he continued speaking.

"Best your father takes ye out before ye mess things up." I ignored the drunk, and thought about what I saw at the time of the attack.

The unseen beast falling from the sky.

However, the crooked man wasn't willing to leave me alone. He kept blabbering, and I tried my best to shut out his words.

"Yer going to be that boy from that song," the drunk continued. "Bett'r not get yerself killed."

He wanted to say more, but seemed to be dumbfounded by nothing exactly. He sort of choked on his words and glared at the air before his eyes.

I sighed, attempting to hint at the rotten man that I was becoming distressed by his presence, but he ignored it. He hummed for a bit, and reminded himself of what he was going to talk about.

His face lightened up with the coming signs of a sudden revelation.

"Ever hear o' the ol' song?" I definitely knew what he was talking about. He acknowledged my knowledge of this song, and began to howl out its lyrics.

_ "Oh, I plead to the gods both above and below _

_ Watch the foolish boy and his blinded soul _

_ His recklessness brought first fire then smoke _

_ Warn the town, if he were to come again _

_ Oh, I plead from both the father and his son _

_ That his father demand that he be gone _

_ The foolish boy fled, his father's will be done _

_ Warn the town, if he were to come again. " _

How funny; he sang the song as if he weren't drunk. I didn't sing along, unsure if I'd sing it in the right tone or pace. I didn't feel like singing at all; I felt an overcoming awkwardness out of the whole situation. A singing Viking who has downed himself with an overload of alcohol.

I shifted myself slightly away from my _friend_, doing so in a discreet manner, before falling back into a state of ponder.

The song.

I never heard of it before; it was only recently, perhaps a few days ago during our second most recent dragon raid. There was something significant in the song. In the lyrics.

However, I heard of no story that had any resemblance to this. As part of our tribe, we'd always take the time to write songs and poems, whatever the hell includes artistic literature, in the name of seemingly historical events. I could've asked the drunk about its origin. But I didn't.

"Yer not fond o' the song?" he later asked, realizing that I hadn't sing along, chuckling heartily, "'Twas written by the men down at the tavern."

I remained silent, and he took my silence as validation to his assumption. He looked uninterested in my mute responses. He stood up, grumbling a bit as he did so.

"Keep hiding, will yah? Pretty sure yer father wouldn't want to see yer face."

He began making his way out of my view when he suddenly paused in his tracks to say one more thing.

"The Earth don't give a damn if you're lost."

He walked away from the rocks and back onto village grounds. I wanted to ask my father, to know what the song meant. But the drunk was right; my father probably didn't want to see my face anyways.

I thought more about the song, and then I knew what, _who, _it was about. I looked down at my chest dishonorably, and for once in my life, I just felt nothing.

I'm going to be that boy in the old song...does anything you say ever make sense?

* * *

><p>I took a long walk, not knowing what to do.<p>

Lost and alone, that's how I've always felt. But that moment, I was just empty. The emotions I felt were stretched to magnitudes that I couldn't even comprehend. It was as if I had eaten everything I could, but my stomach was just _empty._

I just lingered in the forests like a ghost, heading back to the abandoned cliff side. I stumbled a lot, my eyes were blinded by tears. I arrived at my destination, my heart now rivaled with anger and fire.

Who to blame? My brain was calculative and greedy. It wanted to hate, to put blame and reason on someone so that I may pretend as if life wasn't against me. As if the whole world weren't against my wills.

I just sat down and watched the moon glare at me, as I let my conscience grow mad.

I could hear the moon whisper, "Curse you."

But I looked back at the moon, wanting to threaten it, pretending that, in the world of my imagination, I would beat it in any sort of situation, whether it be a battle of muscle or wits.

"Curse you!" I dared the moon.

I'm now on my feet, the human's drive for anger and hate overpowered my self-control.

The wind was blowing now, daring me to end my own life, joining the accolade that the moon had presented to me.

"Jump off," it howled.

I looked at the jagged rocks below, choosing to even consider its extremely pleasant offer. I could see their gluttony, wanting and waiting to impale and sever my body into bits of pieces. The trees grew closer; the wind blew harder; the moon glowed brighter. As if, in unison, my only friends finally turned against me.

I wanted to jump, at that very moment. I wanted to jump, knowing that my death would not be mourned or remembered. In fact, they'd celebrate my departure. It would make everyone happy, even me. It was tempting. It _felt good._

I imagined myself jump. I threw myself off the cliff, plummeting into the rocks below. The rocks ate my body, their dinner, and I could hear the waves crash into the rocks, as if it were grumbling for more. My bones cracked; my torso was punctured. And a midnight black would invade my very own eyes, and I'd be left to die, to wonder if I had regretted life. The ocean would lavishly dispose my body into a lost and forgotten abyss, stuck somewhere in the middle of the deep blue.

I stepped back, slumping my shoulders forward in disappointment. Ever thought about suicide? From my stand of point, it just makes you look like a complete fool. There you are, in a society meant to withstand and survive. And, _there you are_, doing the exact opposite of what everyone else is doing.

Maybe I never really thought about jumping off that cliff...

My mind, however, forced me to turn the other cheek, knowing that my suicide wasn't even going to do anything. It would just bring more stress unto my father.

I shrugged again.

Or alleviate it.

"Ah, what the hell?" I muttered, "I'm too much of a coward to even _die._"

I sighed, kicking the dirt, and watched as the moon-projected dust flew away into the merciless wind.

"I look like a friggin' fool."

A bush ruffled behind me, immediately forcing me to change attention from the craggy boulders beneath to the foliage behind me. Despite the wind and the rustling of countless other leaves, this sound caught my attention. It was pronounced for some reason, as if it were meant that my senses should be taken over by curiosity. I turned my head around, looking to see if anyone or anything was there.

"Hello?" I called out, steadily making my approach.

I received no answer, none other than the very own echoes of myself calling back to me.

But after sounding my summons, I heard the running of footsteps against the damp ground, each step originating further away from me. I didn't chase after the noise. I already knew who it was, just from how soft and light they sounded.

A huge tree now caught my attention, and I was surprised that I hadn't first noticed it. It was brought down, following it, a trail of dirt. As if something very big had landed a violent crash. As if it were a downed dragon.

* * *

><p>AN: Well, now that's started, I'll be updating from time to time, you know, revising certain parts of the story and whatnot, maybe post a few *_more chapters_* (but that's not likely *sad face*). But in the meantime, as I write all these chapters just for you guys (and for my own obsessions), please do me *_*_one *_*_favor. POST A REVIEW. Put what you like. Constructively criticize what you *_*_don't *_*_like. Really, anything would do. It really helps "authors" such as me to be able to understand what my audience thinks of my work (seriously, I'm seeing a blank face. I can't read nothin') so that I (or we) may be able to: 1.) Post more work and 2.) improve on our previous publications. So, if you have read to this isolated group of text and it means something to you, plop down a review! It takes no more than (approximately) 30 seconds of your life! :)**

2. Curiosity's Warning

Curiosity's Warning

* * *

><p>The crunching beneath my feet along with the subtle rustling of leaves spooked the hell out of me as I made my way back to town. My mind was extremely occupied with a thought that bothered me to the fullest extent.<p>

The tree. The downed tree.

There was so little that could answer the question...

Someone chopped it down?

No, my mind replied, _the way it seemed to be brought down was too messy to be a Viking's work._

I thought about it a second more and came up with another conclusion.

Thunderstorm?

No, the tree trunk was way too thick for it to be a storm.

I resorted to one final verdict that sent an awkward feeling throughout my body.

A dragon? A...Night Fury?

I finally arrived at my doorstep and peaked inside. My father didn't seem anxious of my absence, even though it natural for him to be extremely worried. However, he was sharpening his ax, and his busied gestures made him look as though otherwise.

I steadily sneaked in with all the discretion I could muster up, walking inwards with a crouching stance. The reticence that dominated the air made the scratching of rock against steel prominent. One final streak, a _screech!_ and he dropped his arms, preparing to

speak without even looking at me, noticing me without even having a hint of my presence.

I made a for a dash upstairs but failed, caught in the net of words that my father spoke, instilling a sense of unknown fear into me.

"Where have you been?"

The exact words I _didn't _want him to say.

I kept silent, hoping to avoid the topic altogether, and _perhaps _approached with mine: propose that a search party be sent to find the downed dragon. All I could say was that I dare not seek a Night Fury who may possibly be still alive and active, and kill it with nothing but a dagger that could merely make a mark on a dragon's armor.

I mean, I had the chance to, so why not?

But I didn't. The story was too far fetched.

A _Night Fury_?

My father would've never believed me. No one even had an accurate description of it, not even seen one. Hell, how did I even know it was a Night Fury?

But I still wanted it searched.

I'll just be vague, I guess.

I gave myself a second's thought of consideration before beginning my end of the conversation. I started off with a seemingly good statement, just right when my father began to sharpen his axe again:

"There's a downed tree by the abandoned cliff. It looked suspicious. I just thought it may be a dragon."

Screech!

My father paused instantly. I stood awkwardly, quietly shifting my feet and scratching my toes with the tips of my round boots.

I continued, "I just thought, perhaps, we could send a search party?"

My father took his time replying, pretending that my story wasn't out-worldish.

"You know I can't; we have to prepare for the trip to Hellheim's Gate. It'll just be a waste of time," my father replied, as he resumed scraping rock against the head of his ax.

Ah, thanks for dismissing my suggestions like a piece of trash, I thought, repeating the exact same ending phrase, _Just be a waste of time. _I shifted my lips sideways, creating a dimple-like formation on the side of my cheek, showing my displeasure to my father's rejection in my own way.

"It's probably one of Gobber's men; he's been asking them to chop down wood, especially near the cliff," my father resumed.

"The tree didn't look like as if it were chopped down in a controlled way. And there's a huge trail leading away from the trunk," I blurted disagreeably.

Screech!

My father remained in denial, assuring me that it was _not _a dragon.

"The men probably had trouble chopping it down and the trail was probably them dragging the trunk."

I remained silent, knowing that the argument he had made _sort-of _makes sense. But the trail led _away _from the town; why would anyone want to drag needed wood _away _from where it's needed? It all doesn't make sense.

I was completely assured it was a dragon.

I was about to open my mouth for yet another open suggestion, but I was cut-off with my father's need to grind his weapon.

Screech!

Then a pause.

He continued, "Don't get too worried about such things, son. Curiosity might as well kill you."

I grunted, understanding that my words won't be even listened to with a moment of consideration.

My father paused again, and this time looked at me.

"You were at the cliff again."

I was already facing away in complete annoyance to my father's disregard, and I whirled around in an even more exaggerated sense of discontent.

"So _what?_" I let out a long sigh, hoping to make apparent of my wish to have my father stop with his little oration.

But I knew it was a shameful thing to do, to visit the cliffs. My father knew full well what it meant " _I _knew full well what it meant. The cliff was just a symbol of my isolation, of me being a failure. And my father never really liked that.

Neither did I, but _hell, _what choice did I have?

"You know I-" My father choked on his words and sighed as well. "You know I don't want you there."

I scoffed at my father's words. "Then where do you want me?" I scorned, wheezing my nose at him.

My father darted a look at me, raising up onto his feet, and carrying his ax along with him.

"I want you to be at dragon training," he bellowed, tilting his ax horizontally and settling it on both his arms, laying it out in front of me.

He shoved it into my stomach, and I reluctantly took the ax as my own, folding my arms awkwardly as I weakly held the ax.

"You'll learn to walk like us-

He reached behind me and smacked my back, straightening my once slouching posture. I flinched slightly at the unexpected pain.

"-talk like us-

He lifted up my chin to face straight at him, forcing me to keep an unwavering stare.

"-and think like us."

He picked up his helmet, which was hung by the door, and slammed it on top of my head. I grunted upon impact and struggled to keep my stature. The helmet, which was far too big for me, shook around on my head as it did hanging on the pole.

"Because when you carry this ax-

He shoved his big, fat finger into my chest, and my eyes traced along with it before looking back up at my father.

"-you carry all of us."

He adjusted the ax in my hands so that I would actually grasp it by the handle, and my arms suffered under the monstrosity of its weight.

Then an awkward silence fell over us, and the only things I could hear was the constant heaving of my father's chest, along with the occasional popping of cordwood.

My father gradually reached over with his humongous hands and gracefully tore the ax free from my arms.

"This is serious, Hiccup."

_Yeah, I know. _My mind still had that horrible tendency to sarcastically blurt in unnecessary replies.

"You're not the only thing I worry about."

He took a brief moment before continuing in a lower, more secretive tone.

"Berk has been exiled from the coalition-

"Yeah, I know," I said impulsively.

I kept my face straight, somewhat pissed off at my father. For what reason, exactly?

_None. _It was just one of those moments where I feel angered because someone was telling me the _truth. _I won't deny " it is true " but sometimes, the truth hurts, and I just don't like it when it hurts.

My father turned around, dismissing me like I was his his _pet. _Honestly, I don't even know if he was doing this because he _loved _me as a father does his son, or if he's doing his best to uphold the reputation of the House of Haddocks - or whatever was left of it. I was just the physical manifestation of his shame.

I don't know anymore.

Upon seeing his back face me, I climbed up the steep stairs and into my room before my father had another chance to speak to me again, dodging yet another hurtful conversation.

I slammed the door shut once I was inside, taking a moment to recuperate from my loss of patience.

I settled myself down in front of my desk and pulled out my journal-thing from inside my coat, placing it open in front of me. I grabbed a writing utensil that laid beside my notebook and began writing down my thoughts - my only escape from reality, which was quite ironic.

Today, I almost committed suicide...

It was a horrible start, but I continued anyways.

...because I was bored.

I paused and reread that sentence again, entirely confused by my very own thoughts. I quick shrug and I went on writing, not even bothering to revise my previous statement.

There was a fallen tree by the cliffs, and it was taken down in a manner that only left me thinking: something crashed into it. And to hell it was to think it was a dragon, but what else could it be? And my father wouldn't believe anything...

I closed my notebook; a short entry was all I needed, nothing else. I shoved the book back and got up before falling backwards onto my bed.

Time passed as I stared at the ceiling senselessly, waiting as if it were going to say something. It was only in such a way was I able to find sleep, and it would take a series of long hours before I'd finally fall into a state of slumber.

You'll learn to walk like us-

"As if, hell, I could," I whispered, too tired to even use my voice.

-talk like us-

"Yes, and..." I shook my head lazily, like an intoxicated Viking.

-_and think like us._

"And be a mindless brute like the lot of you?" I was cursing my own home, my own people, but it was the only way to alleviate for my...

Because when you carry this ax-

I scoffed at myself, my eyes feeling droopy.

-you carry all of us.

"Into some random pit of doom, I reckon," I muttered sleepily.

A sudden epiphany, an idea that would _most probably _kill me, but give me the _one chance _ needed to redeem for my incompetence. No matter what, I'd be dead both ways. I thought of how I'd be so easily overthrown upon my father's inevitable departure, after I have received title of Chief. Then I looked at my other option "one that would result in an equally brutal death.

I honestly had no other choice, and I don't like waiting for my fate to come to me.

"I'm such an idiot," I groaned, closing my eyes, falling into a peaceful state of slumber.

* * *

><p>Then morning came, and my clumsy self rose into a vertical stance. The sheets of my bed rippled from their neat, organized state and I shoved them aside, off my lap. I rubbed my eyes lousily, adjusting to the new-found sunlight that had managed to peek its way into my room. I stared at the cracked, dry, wooden walls, thinking under the knowledge that I had planned something, and my mind tried to reclaim that memory.<p>

An agenda popped to mind. I instantly climbed out of bed and quickly got my diary-thing that sat by a dimly lit candle, the one standing on my nearly empty personal desk. Everything I had ever kept was in my workshop, but a map, which was conveniently stored into my notebook, and a writing utensil, even possibly a dagger, was all I ever needed.

Without hesitation, I went searching for the Night Fury.

* * *

><p>I quickly went back to my personal room in the smithy and grabbed myself a dagger. A small defensive weapon would even be needed on this venture.<p>

I also took notice that the boats were being readied for departure. Looked like they agreed on assaulting the island. My father was right outside our house then, talking with a group of other men, carrying in his arms supplies needed for the journey. Their chatter was

distant, and though I stood close enough in view right behind the person across him, he never noticed me.

Their faint voices were just in mere hearing distance.

"Gobber, take care of him. Training is...you know," my father worried.

"It's okay, Stoick! Jeez, the young lad has more in him than you think," Gobber promised, receiving signs of utter ambiguity from the other men around them. They all chuckled at such proclaim, nudging Gobber by the shoulders, thinking that he was joking around. The two-limbed man ignored them.

"I hope so," my father replied with doubt.

I instantly hated the conversation they were having and hastily forced myself to change attention to elsewhere. I whirled around, looking over the cliffs and the large, complicated arrangement of boardwalks that mildly tilted its way downwards to the engrossing piers.

The docks were swarming with busied men, carrying and pushing around weapons and supplies. The breeze was moderate, the temperature was cool, and the sun greatly shined across the lands, the kind of brightness that left the entire town in a nice, hazy shade of yellow. Birds circled the ships that gently bobbed in the calmer waters of the docks, their port-sides shaving against the pier. The mechanical cranes clicked and clanked, lifting tons of cargo at a time, its contribution to the progress being ten times more than any Viking alone. The main wharf was completely covered by lines of men, waiting patiently in line for their weapons to be distributed.

As the event unfolded, I, for whatever reason, marveled at how organized the Isle had been. How great of a leader my father was. Of what I'll never be. I smiled grimly at the thought, for the irony was enough to make my mind chuckle.

I broke free from focus and turned away, knowing that I had planned out my afternoon. I glanced back at my father, who was oblivious of my remote presence, as I began walking towards the isolated path that led to one of the few gaps in the town walls.

I didn't bother to say goodbye, and I wondered why I hadn't done so. My mind argued with itself, one side saying, _Why should you? Your father clearly doesn't care_, the other replying, _Hiccup, your father _does _love you._

I suppose my mind was filled with the mistaken belief that, had I said farewell to my father, he would have wanted to know where I was headed; hiding such a quest from a figure of high authority was probably a prudent move. He probably wouldn't have cared one jot. He might even have been pleased that I was headed out for a while- at least then I wouldn't be under his feet and causing more disasters in the village.

If my father did love me, he tried very hard to hide it. Something that comes with the stigma against scrawny sons who are no good to anybody.

The shades of the trees that accompanied the trail on its way outside the town premises engulfed me, and the warmth of the sun quickly faded away. In between each shade of leaves, a sparkle of sunlight would gleam through, creating an intricate design of random, black-and-white geometries on the dirt before me.

I dragged my feet over them, creating a whirl of dust that walked with me before it dissipated with distance. I stopped myself at the borders of the town, where the imaginary cover-up of the forever unfinished wall would stand.

I hesitated before I left to flee into the woods, ignoring the voices in my mind that practically fell into self-argument, a small feeling of guilt slightly tormenting me as I fled. Just by disregarding my own thoughts did my shame grow far worse.

_It was all for a good cause though! _my mind assured.

The secluded_ dings!_ of bells ran across the treetops of the forest, and the remote, yelling of my father, along with his trusted advisers, faintly rounded my ears.

"Get on the ships!"

* * *

><p>I was hunched over the downed, slanted lower trunk of the tree. Its abnormally large size was greatly shrunk down by the marks and splinters left by the fatal impact of the supposed-dragon. It had been my fifteenth time revolving around the trunk, looking for nothing specific, having absolutely no reason for doing so.<p>

My mind remained with a doubtful sense the kept me from expediting deeper into the trail, and I couldn't help but abide its concerns.

I rechecked my pockets to ensure that my dagger was ready to be unsheathed and used for protection. I felt the bulge under my vest, and I resumed my walking, knowing with complete pledge that it was definitely my handy wielded tool.

As I approached the other end of the trunk, my mind reignited with that same fidgety emotion: _I never really thought this through._ I stared at the fallen end of the tree before I continued to venture into the forest. Questions began whirling in my head as I cautiously stepped over the leaves that littered the scene.

Will I be the first to see the beast with my own eyes? _Will it be hiding, ready to ambush its capturer? _The beast was intelligent, no doubt.

I was pretty sure a creature so vile would feel the need to exact its revenge, if the beast was able to retain some.

I stood still, contemplating on whether this was a smart idea or not. My feet tapped nervously against the damp soil, and I swayed about unnervingly, examining the lunacy behind my actions. I shook my head in utter distrust with myself and went along anyways, the crunching of dying leaves and the snapping of fallen branches disrupting nature's tranquil choir of chirping birds and rustling leaves.

* * *

><p>For fifteen minutes straight, I walked with a forced will of perseverance. However, with the effort I had already invested in my search, I found completely nothing at the end of the trail, even after I had scaled around the surroundings a few times.<p>

I reached inside my fur vest and pulled out my notebook, instantly opening it to a map of Berk's wilderness. I scratched a big X inside a circle on the page, wanting to make a reminder to myself that tells me I have already investigated the area. The circle had already been completely filled when I lifted my stick from the paper, and impatience instantly prevailed from my controlled temper.

I slammed my fist against my thigh, immediately looking upwards from my book and straight in front of me. There was still nothing.

"You've gotten to be freaking kidding!" I muttered ferociously.

An instant calm. Then I went into a state of rage again.

"For godsdamn sake!" I cried again. I kicked the dirt and the trees. "You're so godsdamn invisible, huh? Dragon? Even at the godsdamn day, I can't find you!"

After my anger had dissipated, an eerie ambiance of nothing filled my ears.

A step forward. A crunch, and I kneeled downward in an observing stance to take a look at a peculiarly familiar piece of gear in front of me. I picked up the rusty clunk of metal and turned it around in pure curiosity.

It was one of my traps.

And the dragon, if it was the dragon, whatever or wherever the hell it was, managed to bypass it. Secondly, it was free. Or so I thought. Regardless, it worried me for my suspicions were subdued with an unfortunate conclusion: it was a creature of wit. Creatures of wit know how to kill.

"Oh gods," I can't help saying, slowly rising up and stumbling backwards in horror.

Not too late to call for help, my mind indirectly suggested, like an annoying, unneeded voice.

I rejected the offer, still wanting to acquire the dragon's head as a trophy, a piece of decor I'd drape my room with. I continued along the trail, reminding myself with the goal in mind. I quickly pulled out my dagger, fumbling with it as I do so. I was vigorously shaking, but my mind gave me no true reason to be.

What the hell?

I was confused - did I really feel that terrified?

Regardless, I continued walking.

And I grew insane. The trees grew taller, and they seem to be hiding the sun more and more. My vision sharpened; my breathing grew heavy. I kept watching, tracing back and forth the path of the trail.

A couple of times, I tripped, too busy watching my surroundings for anything. But I was also amazed, marveled at how long the trail was. It truly indicated at how fast the beast could travel.

Soon, my fear for the dragon began to turn into frustration, again. I had reached both ends of the trail more than a couple of times, but found nothing. I took out the map, and drew yet a larger circle within the vicinity.

I was already far from the town, but that didn't worry me.

"You got to be godsdamned kidding me," I cursed as I looked up from my map and saw the entire face of an angled-hill. Before me stood practically the entire forest of the Isle.

* * *

><p>For hours, I wandered around the area, but found nothing. I was too impatient, too eager, to find the beast. Perhaps my father was correct. But the trail didn't lead back to the town, and that renewed my interest in finding the beast, even if I was utterly stressed with my search.<p>

It was my third time walking back downhill from the view point in which I had originally scanned the entirety of the forest. My feet slid down the dirt, having found no grip with the loose stones and seemingly dry soil.

A branch was held in the way of my slide downwards, and it ended up almost tripping me. I stumbled forwards, gathering myself quickly, cursing at the branch unnecessarily.

"You stupid tree!"

I whirled around and instantly exacted revenge with a ferocious kick at the base of the trunk. My chest was heaving in an anger conjured up by my impatience, and continuously kicked it over and over, thinking that I would damage the tree with my twig-like legs.

Then I heard shuffling behind me. I quickly turned, and raised my guard again. My grunting, my cursing, all stopped immediately. A rock obscured my view, disabling me from seeing what made the noise, so I began making a steady approach towards the sunken boulder and peeked over.

I took a small glance, and all I noticed was a big, black, and sleek figure, tied by a bolas, laid no more than a few feet away from me. My mind sparked with an alarming caution that immediately pushed my head back down and beneath line of sight. My lungs began to breathe rapidly, aroused by a certain excitement mixed with unknown fear. The uncanny feeling surged through my spine and stiffened the hairs in my body. I switched my mind back to concentration.

Oh, in the name of the gods...

I shut my eyelids in utter dismay, sighing with a brief moment of

relaxation in an attempt to calm myself and handle the situation - like a Viking would. I recalled back to the quick snapshot of the downed dragon, remembering the vulnerable state it was in.

It was caught in the reigns of the bolas, and there was no way that it could escape.

"I can't believe I did it," I whispered, a mix between happiness and anxiety.

I popped out of my cover and hesitantly moved closer to observe the beast, taking each step with the utmost of prudence. I praised my work and marveled at the strength of the bolas, knowing that it had never given way to the dragon's probably all-night attempts at snapping himself free.

I stared at my work with a gaping jaw, my wondrous thoughts haven grown more striking with the scene.

And the dragon, it was a marvelously _beautiful _creature. My mind began describing it to myself, like an obsessed trasure hunter holding, in front of him, a forgotten, golden goblet that was worth more than entire kingdoms. Well, that's what it was worth to me - to find the beast downed in such a delicate state. It was _perfect. _It was just for _me. _

Night-black scales; fin-like spines. Three pairs of wings; a main one, a tail one, and a smaller pair located somewhat lower on its limbs behind the mai-

My mind struck with an obvious thought that I had never even considered.

How the hell am I suppose to bring it back to the town?

I gave myself a few second's thought, quickly scrolling my limited options, wanting to approach this in a way that would glorify my victory allthemore. Killing it was the first step; then, I could ask others to come and help me drag my work back to town and praise it. However, my dagger was not even closer to being capable of piercing the scales of a dragon, let alone a Night Fury, whose scales, I was sure, would be far more stronger.

I dropped my arms as I usually would when I was at a lost, and circled around briefly before my eyes fell upon a peculiar detail. It's armor was weak around its neck; there was a scar, some sort of opening for me to cut through and sever the internal organs of this vile beast.

Oh, wasn't my day great!

This was that one chance that I ever needed, the one chance that I had been constantly begging for. My need to celebrate became a little charade of skipping gleefully around in complete commotion.

I stepped on the dragon, thinking myself as being praised in the name of our ancestors.

The imaginary glasses of wine raised in celebration, "Hiccup killed the Night Fury!"

What made it even better? It was the only Night Fury presumed to be alive and raiding. The sort of rarity in a dragon that would give me more than just enough reputation I needed. For my redemption.

I can finally redeem myself.

A sudden movement, the surprising interruption in my personal celebration.

Instantly, my thoughts diminished. The dragon had shuffled its body and forced me to land on my back. Afraid that it was awake, I gathered myself quickly, and pointed the dagger at the beast. It's movements were concise, and they prevailed for a brief moment of time. It halted its straggle, and I stumbled backwards further from the dragon when I gazed upon its face.

I saw its eyes. Those green eyes. His pupils were narrow. But they shined with innocence, glaring with a fear never I had I seen before in a dragon that was so exalted in the ability to instill fear and with death. They just gleamed with the exact _opposite _of his notoriety.

He blinked at first, but he continued staring at me, his unbroken vision slowly causing me to put my guard down. I stared at them with amazement, not realizing the holy and magical force that seemed to persuade me to drop my needed diligence.

It was all but a devil's deception, the logical part of my mind reminded.

I shook my head back into focus, knowing that it was essential that I kill the beast. I redid my stature, straightening my back and holding the dagger in the air, its tip facing downward. I shut my eyes briefly and made myself a promise.

"Finally, I'll be one with my town," I muttered angrily, the taste of triumph touching my tongue.

I wanted this, I knew. I rose the dagger in higher into the sky, the dragon making no move to hide its weakness. I had beaten it fairly, and it knew that he couldn't keep up his charade, his successful raids on my town. He knew that there would be a time when he'd taste defeat, no matter how insurgent the circumstances may be.

Slowly, the creature closed its eyes, and groaned a last, weak cry. It had submitted itself to the arms of death.

It had nothing to live for, a voice, one out of my control, spoke to me.

I was ready to drive my dagger into it, to end its life. But a part of my mind stopped me, my muscles shaking vigorously, wanting to resist, yet abide, these commands. Those very words created an invisible shield; like columns, they supported my arms from dropping the dagger.

Those words - there was something in them that hindered my mad drive to steer the dagger into its neck. It imposed an experience, a meaning that I understand all to well.

Again, it repeated: _it had nothing to live for._

I attempted forced my arms downwards, but they didn't budge. I argued with myself, understanding that my life would be complete with the death of this dragon.

I needed this. I needed to kill the dragon. What is it to me, anyways?

It all made perfect sense to make such a decision, and there was no way that I could refuse to such an offer.

I couldn't do it.

"Godsdamn it," I muttered furiously.

I dropped my arms like nothing but dead limbs, then I held them behind my head, whirling around the forest, pretending as if I would find an answer in the trunks of trees.

What the hell do I do?

I stood in self-embarrassment, awkwardly stumbling in random patterns, tapping my fingers against my empty skull in a what-to-do manner. These brief series of events and I already found a thing about myself, and I couldn't even find one good reason to be proud of it:

I couldn't kill a dragon. Even if it were left vulnerable to my mercy.

* * *

><p>My mind found a solution to this situation, and I wasn't exactly proud of it either. Upon what seemed to be hours of contemplation, my mind decided to settle upon the one, most irrational thing anyone could ever do in their life.<p>

I was on my knees, cutting the intricately tied bolas, undoing all the work I had done, the amount of effort driven behind this search slowly wasting away as each string severed with an almost inaudible twang and a tumble of unraveling twine.

I grind the sharpened head of my dagger as fast as I could, and I planned to help the dragon escape. One last piece of rope, but it wasn't needed. The entirety of the bolas was already loosened enough for the dragon to make his getaway.

I laid back, still on my knees, appreciating the kind deed I had done to my to-be killer.

My actions instantly turned against me. With the dragon now free, it pinned me down against the nearby rock with its enormous strength, moving faster than even lightning itself, outpacing the tracing of my eyes.

I was dumbfounded, terrified. Yet, there was no reason for me to be surprised.

I had this coming, literally.

Perhaps it the way he glared at me. The way his fearsome eyes tore through my soul.

He studied me for a few seconds, sort of pitying me for my impulse to make such a decision - I bet even the dragon thought I was stupid. Now he was in my position. Now he was the one standing on me, the complete exchanging of roles. Which was, by all means, _definitely what I wanted. _

My mind tried to think optimistically, being the poor, sadistic humorous thing it always has been.

_At least you technically died __trying to kill__ a dragon._

I metaphorically rolled my eyes, too afraid to actually do so in the face of the deadliest dragon on the Isle.

Technically.

And even at its unhelpful statement, I found nothing to negate my remorse. I literally had the dragon up for the taking, and I _let it free. _

I laid still as I wait for my head to be blown apart, the bits of me stained all over the forest, liken once-living rotten paint. The dragon heaved, its wide-open mouth gaping hideously at me. In its fire-lit throat, I can see the chambers of his lively heart pulsating. I didn't shut my eyes; I winced somewhat, but for whatever reason, I wanted to embrace my death like a friend. An unwavering stare into its eyes - which I obviously never held forever.

Just when I thought the dragon would release its shot, I instantly shut my eyes to the tightest that it could.

Screw death.

Then..._nothing._ Nothing but the noise of stormiest sea in the worst of its days being blown against my face along with the unforgiving barrage of viscous dragon fluid. Then it all ended, and the dragon quickly departed, heading away from the village. I remained petrified.

"Oh, gods," I managed to mutter.

I still heard it roar as it became more distant. I tried reaching my arms out, to find leverage to help myself get up, but I dropped them, far too weak or stunned to even perform simple finger movements. My eyes gradually closed, due to the lack of energy left in me, as my body landed face-first against the cold, damp dirt, and its refreshing coolness led me to a peaceful sleep.

* * *

><p>I quickly got home upon waking up, stumbling around pointlessly as I tried to get a hold of my surroundings. Getting home wasn't a problem, but I was constantly stumbling over roots and rocks interrupted my thoughts, which I found extremely irritating as I was deeply thinking about what I had encountered.<p>

"What the hell?" I kept asking myself.

I was still confused, as to what I have done and as to why I was spared. But I was also thankful that the dragon headed away from the town, especially with more than half the town gone to attack the dragons' island.

Even as I laid on my bed and stared upwards at the ceiling, that dragon was still in my mind. There was literally nothing for me to do with it, now that it was loose and free. But it did spare me. And I remembered: the dragon just ran away from me; it didn't fly.

Or maybe: it _couldn't _fly.

* * *

><p>The next day, I was violently and annoyingly woken up by Gobber. It was only then I just remembered I was in for training, and my mind was bothered with a sort of excitement that I don't like feeling.<p>

"Get up, young lad!" He kept poking me with his cold, metal hand.

"The others are waiting for your lazy ass, move it!"

_Let them wait, _my mind responded.

"Hurry!" he repeated.

I lazily obeyed his orders, clumsily getting out of bed and dressing myself in my usual attire. The wooden boards continued creaking and rocking at the stomping of Gobber's impatience, who began pulling on my shirt which I was yet to finish pulling down over my body.

We were headed towards the arena, placed far from the town and isolated on its own column of rock. The only way to it was connected by a bridge.

We walked across its only pathway, but I did my best to persuade Gobber from having me humiliate myself in front of the others.

"Father thought wrong!" I said, but Gobber still shoved me along, unaffected by my attempts at persuasion.

"I'm just going to get myself killed!" I continued hopelessly.

I tried using the little gaps in between the wooden boards of the bridge to stop myself from reaching my destination, but Gobber's strength easily overpowered my mind.

"I'll see to it that it's best prevented," he replied.

I turned around and faced my teacher. This time, the mastermind stopped in his tracks.

"I can't kill a dragon!" Gobber's height overshadowed mine; he looked down at me, with a questionable glare.

"Isn't that why you're sent to trainin'? Is it 'cause you're weak?"

"No, it's not that," I paused, "Well, it is that, but I also don't have the.."

My voice trailed off, wanting to pick the right word, "...heart."

He eyed me steadily.

"You're a lying boy. You've caused too much trouble just so that you might kill a dragon."

I was turned around and shoved along once again, forced to walk towards to a pool of remorse.

"You've got the 'heart'"

I thought otherwise; I began to regret not killing the poor beast. There was no way for me to escape, and soon enough, I saw the faces of other fellow students.

* * *

><p>Snotlout, Ruffnut, Tuffnut, Fishlegs, and Astrid; in the town of hundreds, they were the only ones of valid age to enter training. What made it even more convenient was that they're the same group of kids that I hate hanging out with, even if I don't really hang out with them at all. Well, there was no one else to hang out with.

If anything was humorous about the town at the time, this was.

Their voices echoed throughout the empty mountains and cliffs, glamouring in complete teenage-excitement.

"Can't wait to get some serious burns!"

"Hell yeah!"

"It's only cool if you get a scar out of it."

A bobbing of heads and nods were exchanged between the group.

But as I came, they ceased to be. They were silenced, all of them with looks of confusion and pessimism on their faces. If I were them, I'd do nothing else. Anyone else who acted differently would be deemed crazy.

I shrugged, wanting to say that I agreed with them, that I shouldn't be in this either.

"I see you've come here to get yourself killed," Snotlout greeted.

I'm starting to wish I did.

"Are we using him as bait, or what?" Ruffnut's arms dropped as her jaw was left hanging.

"We don't need him; we already have bait here," Tuffnut gestured towards his sister.

With his words, they fell into a mad scramble. Gobber rolled his eyes knowing that such inevitability cannot be prevented.

Gobber disregarded the others' reactions, knowing how dumbfounded they were, how idiotic they thought it was to let me in.

The entire group waited as the humongous doors that sunk downward, into the ground, and into the arena, were being unlocked; their intricate system of chains and levers and gears clicking and clacking.

And they majestically opened, arousing a wall of dust as they did.

Behind the doors, they unveiled an underground arena of a chained-dome ceiling, meant to withstand almost every dragon's fiery breath. The stone walls the encaged it all had built-in pens that were shut tight with enormous boulder-weight doors that were bolted and chained down into the ground. In them: dragons. And it was eerily silent.

"Hasn't been used in years," Gobber muttered, "Last time it was used, a kid got slaughtered here."

My mind instantly fell into an awkward daze of uneasiness, sharing this same inelegant feeling with the kids upon hearing Gobber's heartening news. To make things better, I could still see the blood stains tainted on the walls of the arena. My stomach flipped, yet, I was still perplexed. The arena just had the right amount of the wrong type of _marvelous. _

Gobber shoved me along with the rest of the students as I stood in amazement with a gaping mouth, calmly shoving walking down the ramp that led to my predestined death bed.

The other kids wowed and gasped, sharing the same stunned feeling that engulfed me. I choked on my own saliva as I continued staring upwards in circles.

"Damn," Snotlout commented.

"Holy-" Rufftnut and Tuffnut sounded.

"Get your heads in the game, guys," Astrid smirked, almost having the entirely opposite feeling compared to the rest of the kids.

"Hey! Gather up 'round here," Gobber called, whirling his hand in a funnel-like shape, designating to an area in front of an enormous cage door.

The students, still awe-struck by their training ground, took positions that Gobber has so kindly pointed out for them.

"Today, the goal is to survive," Gobber began.

All eyes were instantly on him, caught by his bellowing and

fascinating voice. Then he brought our attention toward a rack of shields, laying against the arena walls. All of them were covered in dust. One breath and it would sweep away with a miniscule cloud.

"These shields were made to withstand fire and molten rocks," he blandly stated, shrugging with slight apprehension, "They're old...but, eh."

I was confused, not having seen the point of this lesson, and Gobber didn't seem too reassuring about the proclaimed strengths of the shields.

The goal is to survive? How obvious could it get?

Most of the others felt this was quite serious, however, as it was evident upon their humorless faces.

He moved over to one of the doorways; beside it hung a sign that said in faded scratch marks: "Gronckle." I was reluctant as to what I knew he was going to do next.

Naturally, everyone followed him and formed a line in front of the gigantic door, waiting for further instructions or lectures.

I couldn't help but notice that some of the others were jumping mad with glee.

Wait 'til you lose an arm, I thought.

Gobber had his hand on a lever, looking calmer than ever, while the rest of us kept looking nervous or eager.

"Inside is a dragon. I'll be letting it free."

And before anyone had the will to ask questions, the handle was pulled, and the doors opened. The gates of hell let loose its demon. The cranking of gears was so sudden, and the once-seemingly absent dragon appeared.

A Gronckle, they called it.

Big and fat. Its wings were unnaturally small for its size, and despite its lack of speed, its ability to hover and shoot molten rocks made it a dangerous creature.

We scattered mindlessly. It was our first thought of action.

Gobber remained silent and peaceful as he laid still against the walls of the cage, the very same cage the dragon was in, not bothered by its monstrous presence.

All of us were able to outrun the creature with ease, but we were stuck _inside _this death trap. We were nothing but flies - all the Gronckle had to do was swat us.

_This is going great, _my mind went.

Snotlout yelled out with a thought; "Aren't you going to train us first?"

Gobber shrugged with an exaggerated frown. "Is this not training?"

There was almost nothing for us to utilize. Other than the shields.

"_...made to withstand fire and molten rocks."_

My mind went into an instant epiphany. _This was to test how quickly we could think._

I understood what Gobber wanted us to achieve, but Astrid got to that conclusion first.

"Grab a shield!"

Gobber suddenly gained interest, gathering himself and watched eagerly.

In a matter of seconds, the entirety of the population of the arena went over to the rack of shields, now overwhelmed by instinct-driven teenagers fighting for their lives. The dragon, too, decided to pay a visit, as it still sought to run down its victims.

As the last one to grab a shield, I struggled, pulling the jammed object with all my strength.

Firing a few shots around the arena, the dragon was yet to notice me, as the others were putting space between each other once again.

I was able to remove the shield, but because of how sudden it was let loose, I dropped it, and it began rolling across the arena. I pursued it, disregarding the threat of a dragon.

Which now had its attention on me.

It proceeded towards me, noticing that I was occupied with my shield.

And I only noticed the humongous piece of flying armor when it was too late.

The beast was in my face and rammed itself against me. I could hear the cracking of my spine as I flew towards the aides. I hit face first against the arena walls. I cried out in pain. I felt too weak to do anything, and when I turned around to confront my opponent, the beast opened its mouth. Inside, I saw the an orange light, brightening as it strove to end my life.

"Hiccup!" Gobber called out.

_I hated that call, _my mind gave a final thought.

I shut my eyes again, hiding my vision from the scene of my death. I heard the breath let loose, but death didn't engulf me. I felt a ball of heat pass over my head, but my senses remained functional.

As the source of heat directly passed over my head, I skulked even more. Confused, I opened my eyes, noticing I was yet to be killed. A

scorched mark was right above me, creating a dent in the arena walls. A crater to mark my near-death.

The dragon was pulled away from me, and was being attacked with Gobber's vicious demeanor. Gobber had a warhammer in his hand, and continued hitting the dragon senselessly. It cried in pain as Gobber ripped off one of its wings, grounding it.

Blood spilled out and all over the ground, but despite it being grounded, the dragon still squirmed, its will to live not lessened in any way. Finally, with the war hammer, one that came seemingly out of nowhere, held up in the air, one more deadly strike, and the beast was still. We all watched the beast continue breathing until it slowly came to a stop.

"You killed it," Fishlegs mentioned, "Could've saved it for training." He stared down at the bloody carcass with sorrow, for his amazement with dragons was what made him sympathetic with these mindless brutes.

"We have many more of them anyways," Gobber heaved. The rest remained silent.

He then turned to me. "Godsdamn it, Hiccup! It's like you want to be godsdamn killed!"

Did I not say?

He turned to the rest of the group.

"Always know this: dragons are merciless," then slowed down the pace of his words to clarify and emphasize, "They always, _always_, go for the kill."

He pointed a metaphorical finger at all of us, conveniently stopping at me, accentuating with great movement.

I brought myself on my feet in shame, then curiosity. That statement struck to mind, knowing that in my past experiences, one that had occurred recently, such statement was proven wrong: "they always go for the kill."

* * *

><p>"So why didn't you?" I asked myself, picking up the pieces of loose scaled-armor from where the cut bolas lays.<p>

I was alone again, in the forest, looking for the downed beast, under the assumption that it lost its ability to fly. I remembered it bumping and crashing into rocks and boulders, so such assumption was only necessary.

Why couldn't it fly?

All the more reason to look for the damned creature. I stood around, following a trail of black scales that I had found from when the dragon and I first met each other.

I followed the trail for a few more minutes, until I stopped myself along the edge of a cove.

I kneeled down to pick up one more black scale. The trail ended here, but there were no signs of him. Only silence.

The cove was undoubtedly peaceful, beautiful as well. All around the cove, there maintained a natural wall, just a beautiful overhang of the trees and rocks that create a nice, dark, cozy blend of deathly shadows. The cove's center was occupied by a lake, its water fed by a nearby waterfall. Rocks jutted outwards from the surface, moss grew nearby the undisturbed body of water.

A sudden scattering, followed by a mild roar, caught my attention. A familiar black figure coagulated out of nowhere, attempting to break out of its natural cage. I found myself a small boulder to cower behind as I watched in bewilderment.

_It lives, _my mind announced.

For whatever reason, I was filled with joy. I was about to meet up once again, with the world's deadliest creature, and I felt happier than I had ever felt in years. It was just that sort of excitement, the very boundary between life and death, and I was addicted to it.

I saw it, trying to climb its way out of the cove, but its efforts were rendered useless. It scratched the Cliffside helplessly, attempting to gain grip of the Now I observed the creature with interest, pulling out the notebook that I had quickly grabbed before departing. With my writing utensil in hand, I drew the first accurately recorded depiction of a Night Fury, as I should've done in my first encounter.

Rounded, sleek head; four wings, two largely spanned on the mid-torso, two on the ends of its tail-

Correction.

I looked down on my notebook. I had the assumption that there were two tailfins, for nature loved symmetry. But the creature only had one.

It had lost the other.

I looked back at the creature, who was now utterly failing at clawing fish for food. The distant splashing of aroused water woke my senses and forced my attention at its desperation. The dragon dived its head in, but managed to chew at the trapped fish.

I began crawling closer to the edge of the cliff, wanting a better look at the dragon, my eyes gaping widely with a certain type of amazement that I've never had before.

I observed with too much interest, and incidentally dropped the stick of wood into hostile territory. It made a slight noise, but it intensified with echoes, bringing the dragon's attention towards me. He rose his head to where the pen landed, then his eyes trailed upwards at me, having noticed my rather unusual silhouette.

Neither of us hid; neither of us taunted.

We stared into each other's eyes. In his, I saw curiosity, sparked with fear for the unknown. The same, kindred spirit stirring in me. However, the dragon's eyes were shining with an awkward innocence.

And yet, I knew those eyes were false. It was a devilish deceit.

I slowly cowered back into the shadows, hoping that he'd lose interest in me, but it served to be pointless. He still kept a bridge of unbroken vision.

I noticed that night was beginning to fall; the sun was already urging me to go home so that it may put itself to sleep among the horizon and let the stars regain their short-lived control of the skies once more. Hoping to see the dragon again, I left, my feet crunching leaves below me, my mind flying in the air. The dragon kept looking to where I would be if I had remained, being the lost and lonely creature it was.

A voice whispered in the back of my mind, acting as the unnecessary reminder that told me of the truth full well:

_You're a godsdamn idiot. _

I ignored it, just as I had ignored almost every other sensible thought I ever had.

I hoped that it would remain alive until the sun conquered the stars and broke open the horizon with its orange glow; I was assured it would remain alive until the next day. I had so much to think about it, and yet there was only one thing that I want to do.

As I ran back, past the army of trees that so kindly guided my path home, my father's words spoke to me, instantaneously. But I disregarded them for my childishness and curiosity overrode any sort of sanity or caution I was unlikely to maintain.

"Curiosity might as well kill you."

3. Forbidden Friendship

****Forbidden Friendship****

* * *

><p>It was windy that night, and signs of incoming rain appeared all over the gloomy, cloudy sky. Only a portion of the moon was able to peek over the clouds and shower the town in its silver rays.<p>

Everyone was eating dinner in the main hall supposedly, and since I had no desire to cook for myself - not that I could cook well either - I decided to eat there as well.

I mean, I might as well, right?

Not only that, my brain was even more busied with the dragon than yesterday. It was already two days in my father's departure and I was doing the most outlandish thing a child Viking could ever do " let

loose a dragon.

Gobber and the others were there as well, the exact group of people I _didn't_ _want to see, and it was inevitable that they'll talk about me upon my arrival. But seeing that the only empty table was next to them, I hesitantly walked myself over.

I heard Gobber's voice fade in as I got closer, the topic seemingly confusing for me as I wasn't present when it started:

"It depends on your physical position and the role you play being there."

I gradually closed the door as quietly as I could, the creaking noise caused by the hinge's age vibrating throughout the entire wall, disrupting the students' conversation. A warning to my arrival.

Silence fell over the group as they saw me approach them, their eyes tracing me uninterruptedly.

Gobber decided to ask the group a question about me; "What was wrong with Hiccup's role today?"

My cover was now fully exposed.

_Well, you tried, _my mind said.

It was the annoying ones who answered first, unsurprisingly. I mean, there was almost nothing else to expect from them, _almost _nothing.

"He was there at the arena," Snotlout snorted.

I raised my eyebrows and rolled my eyes as I walked past the devilishly smiling scrub that scooted over to occupy the nearest empty seat on _their _table.

I never intended to sit there, so wasn't bothered by it, but their comments kept raining down.

"He's still alive," Tuffnut added. Snotlout acknowledged her answer with a gentle nod of approval.

I rolled my eyes before looking briefly at Gobber briefly â€" a sign of sympathy on his face. But he knew I could withstand such petty insults.

I easily ignored them, too busy worrying about the dragon in my head, too bewildered with the decision I had made.

Astrid found the seemingly perfect answer: "He's _never_ where he should be."

The tone in her voice made her sound as if she were my mother â€" well, it's not like I knew what my mother sounded like _back then._

"Ah! Yer right Astrid!" Gobber congratulated.

I secluded myself at a separate table, my only companion being my bowl of soup. I rose the spoon to my mouth and sipped it, dropping my spoon into the bowl once again.

As I dug into my meal, I heard Gobber continue.

"Well, 'ere ya go."

He dropped a book, appearing what seemingly out of nowhere, and its relative enormity caused the table to shake upon impact. It was thick, and the cover seemed to be made of leather. Imprinted on it, Book of Dragons.

The only book ever to have somewhat accurate recordings of dragons, their physical description and attributes. It had never been updated for generations. I cared not; the dragon species Night Fury popped to mind, and I had instantly grown a significant interest in researching it.

The majority of the kids showed their distaste for reading, while Fishlegs predictably boasted about his insatiable appetite for its contents.

"...there's this other one that spits boiling water at your face..!" His eccentric, light-hearted tone showed signs of renewed fascination with these ungente beasts.

The twins disregarded Fishlegs' unnecessary babbling.

All the while, their conversations were interrupted by the sudden boom of thunder. The faint noise of rain could be heard outside, patting against the hard-solid surfaces endlessly. A cold draught swept into the mead hall, cooling the air to a chill.

Our trainer, who had been abruptly halted in his lecture, turned his attention back to us, quite delighted with the news he was able to assume from his observations.

"Read up," Gobber told us once more before departing. "Surely, there won't be any dragons tonight."

With that, he whirled around and limped out of the hall, a few white faces tuning up at the noise of immense door slamming.

The group began to scatter one by one, having either read their homework before it had been assigned or having no interest in reading it at all. No one but Astrid remained.

I stood up and began walking over to her table, taking a very deep interest in the book. I had read it before, but on the record about Night Furies? I've already forgotten everything, well, forgotten its _lack _of information, really.

I stopped my awkward stumble and halted right beside Astrid, who was looking at the others who had already encountered the pouring rain outside.

"So, I guess it's just you and me, huh?" I asked nervously.

She shoved the book aside and turned away from me, scooting herself

off the chair.

"Already read it."

_Well, you tried, _my mind gave to me.

I looked down on the cover of the book, always hating the feeling of being denied, though I was already accustomed to it. Taking the only opportunity, I settled myself down on what was originally Astrid's seat, appreciating the warmth that still occupied the bench. I began scouring through its guts, hoping to find any information on the Night Fury, regardless of it being extremely seldom seen.

I flipped through the pages, noticing one thing similar about all the description of the dragons: they were portrayed as unholy beasts whose taste for blood remained unrivaled. The lists of dragons were endless; some of them weren't even half filled.

Along I went, and I read to myself, quickly skipping to the final judgment of these creatures:

On the left..

"Extremely dangerous, kill on sight."

To the right..

"Extremely dangerous, kill on sight."

Flip!

On the left..

"Extremely dangerous, kill on sight-"

"Here you go," a man interrupted me, placing a candle beside the book. "The lights will be going out any minute."

It was the chef. I could tell by his apron-covered armor which was tainted brown and red, or whatever colors that appear in the food that Vikings eat. He was just like any other Viking around here â€" big, beefy, _round, _and obviously amazingly strong.

Then again, there was something different about him. He had this natural gentleness attached to him, but an ability to release a sense of inconsolable, merciless wrath upon those he deemed worthy to reveal upon - and he wasn't afraid to use it.

I nodded thankfully as he gently patted my back and turned away to resume cleaning up the halls. I watched him walk away for a brief moment, his boots knocking against the wooden boards with an echoing vibrato, before looking back down, resuming my research.

_Flip! _

Finally, after having scrolled through the countless numbers of pages, I had reached the Night Fury, the very last page of the book. I scanned around the page to find anything _useful, _but there wasn't _anything. _No picture, no description. I scrolled my fingers throughout the entire page, muttering the same thing over and over

again.

Size.

"Unknown..."

Lower.

Speed.

"Unknown..."

Lower...

Wing span.

"Unknown."

Everything else?

Blank. Nothing. Unwritten. _Unknown. _

And on the bottom of the page, one single note was made.

Hide and pray that it doesn't find you, was all it said.

Chills instantly surged through my body;_ had this been the dragon ___I___ had contact with?_ I remained unsure whether the book was reliable or not.

I rejected its information, knowing that its author had _most probably _been biased the entire time. I mean " honestly, if you are in a war _against _the dragons, how else would you describe the enemy? All the others were ignorant, "easy-going"..._I guess. _They dared not challenge anything, or, more importantly, this book. We're Vikings " we're stubborn.

I shoved the book aside, staring into the fire of a candle that flickered against and across the enormous, now blackened, walls of the main hall. I stared into it blankly, questioning again with the same uncertainty that first struck me upon finding that page.

Had this been the dragon I had contact with?

It was then that I departed; I had not found anything I wanted in the book, and I closed it abruptly, powered by this inner hatred. I didn't even know what drove this irrational emotion.

I calmed myself down as I quietly stormed out of the humongous common room, which was now empty, completely lacking people, and majority of the lights were out. It's funny " I didn't even notice the people taking out the torches. I was just _so _into the book.

The lights were all gone, all except the one beside me. The candle, the one so kindly prepared and given to me by the chef. Quickly, I ended its life, pinching the flame as I endured its sting.

I calmly walked outside the door, which sounded with the pattering of rain against the wooden surface. I remained still outside, letting the weather drench me and my clothes. I sat there, persisting against

the ever flowing droplets of cold water, until a booming thunder spooked me onto my feet, rushing me back home in utter despair.

_The dragon is going to be alright, _I assured.

* * *

><p>The humongous chain dome rustled with clings! and _clangs!_ in the unforgiving wind, which howled ferociously, creating a deadly ambiance that did not raise the teens' spirits in their hopes of beating the dragon.

A maze was created, set by towering, standing planks; we were surprised when we first saw it. What we were against was what scared us even more.

A Nadder, this time. Big legs, compared to its wing-intertwined arms, and its long tail, covered by a spine of sharp needles, capable of detaching themselves.

"A whip that shoots needles," Gobber kindly summarized. "But, like us, they too have weaknesses. Blind spots, as I call them. The goal of the day is to find them. Don't kill the Nadder, however. I'd like to keep this one."

With almost no view of the gate, we started to become anxious. Afraid that the dragon would storm right through the planks and break our bodies as we were yet to notice what the hell was happening. The others instantly scattered, in hopes of finding a better hiding spot.

But I paid no attention. I stood still looking at Gobber so that I may complete my agenda. My arms dropped to my sides, in them a shield and an ax.

"Has anyone ever seen a Night Fury?"

Gobber, who was now outside the cage, was stumped upon listening to my question, as he was more focused on the lesson at hand.

"I don't think anyone has ever lived to tell the tale."

But I suggested otherwise, knowing that the chances of it had to be unlikely.

"Seen one sleeping, at least? There's...there's _gotta_ be some sort of-"

I was dragged behind cover, caught off-guard, before Gobber had any chance to reply. I stumbled and looked up to find it was Astrid. Gobber was kind enough to refuse to answer my queries.

Astrid held her finger to her lips, signaling me to be quiet. Alongside her was Snotlout, who gulped nervously at the prospect of the situation. I knew well that the Nadder was _really_ _close.

I peeked around the corner, immediately retreating my head back at the sight of the beast. Realizing that it hadn't become aware of our presence yet, I took another look, and the dragon, I was now able to observe, was scurrying through the maze, looking to find its victims,

and it was mere steps away from us; we remained invisible to the oblivious creature. It sniffed and scanned its surroundings, hoping to find one clue that leads to us. Its back faced us, and so one by one, we rolled over across its path that we may flank the dragon and put it out. We were discreet at first, and my heart jumped excitedly at the thought that I was finally able to play a role. To be...something. _

Astrid rolled across, then so did Snotlout. Both of them executed it perfectly, making almost no noise at all. Then I went, charging across the gap and lunging and bending forward to begin the roll.

Then, I dropped my shield at the middle of the opening, the clanking noise catching the Nadder's attention.

"Godsdamnit," I muttered under my breath.

It swiped around instantly. Me being the first victim it saw, it charged at me, eager for the kill. I immediately picked my shield back up as I stumbled onto my feet.

But Astrid saw me as a tactical distraction and utilized me to her advantage. While the Nadder was too busy trying to impale my scrawny body, she charged as well, chasing after the dragon that has yet to notice her. Unfortunately, I foiled her plans. Too terrified, I ran towards where Astrid was, running past her and switching places inadvertently. The need to save my own ass directed the Nadder's attention to Astrid; she was dumbstruck, the ax still in her hand, ready to strike.

"Shit!" she cried.

She had her split-second thinking and decided that it was best she climbed onto the beast anyways, exchanging looks between a temporary safe haven and the dangerous hell with a reluctant face. A grunt, then she immediately appeared hanging on to its spine as it shook her around. The Nadder went knocking down walls, all in a vain attempt to shake Astrid off. The others dodged and jumped both the planks and the tail of the dragon, screaming mindlessly in complete fear. I was utterly confused.

I was hunched over as I attempted to run away from the chaos that ensued for my incompetence. The wooden boards fell like dominoes, completely destroying the entire maze and revealing the apoplectic dragon with Astrid clinging on for all her worth, recklessly charging around the arena.

It was only when the maze was completely demolished did Astrid finally let go, to land on top of me. The Nadder still waved around barbarously for a few seconds before realizing that its attacker had disappeared from its back.

I stared into the eyes of the demonic, war-mongering warrior, and watched her wondrously as she tried getting up, panting frantically.

"Hiccup!" she cried.

I shook my head slightly as I reminded myself of our current

situation.

No time to marvel at that moment, a godsdamn dragon is going to kill both of us.

Astrid stood up and whirled around, instinctively wanting to pull her ax free. I laid still on the ground, not having the same reaction time as she did.

Her ax was, unfortunately, stuck to my shield, and her tugging was rendered useless by my inability to let my shield free. Both of us attempted pulling our equipment as time dwindled, trying yet again and again with each failure. But the Nadder was too close.

We both glanced at the Nadder, noticing its steady and accelerating advance, and began jerking with much more strength, grunting under extreme stress of the situation.

Astrid was just done with me, knowing that there was a much easier way to loosen the ax. The shield managed to stay attached to me. Then a punch and, as my hands tended to the damage dealt to me, the shield was let go. Leaving it free for Astrid to use.

The charging Nadder did not expect to be hit, and so the shield that was swung at its face was intended to be fatal. The shield shattered into pieces, and its fragments flew everywhere. The others braced at the sight of a million flying, uncontrollable splinters.

The dragon remained unscathed.

Yet, the Nadder whimpered, stumbling away from Astrid and I. With Gobber already inside the arena, the dragon was dragged back into its cage and taken care of, leaving time for Astrid and I to recuperate.

"C'mon you stupid animal," Gobber muttered.

Astrid heaved and turned to me, threatening me with her ax, stuffing it against my throat.

"Get the hell up!"

I was already doing so anyways, but her lecture continued, nor did I know what to expect.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" She shoved me back unexpectedly.

The entire group watched our little dilemma unfold.

"This is why you're so godsdamn useless, Hiccup!"

I remained silent, with a half-questionable look manifested on my face.

"You're just a waste of space! Why the hell are you here in the first place?"

I was bewildered - finally had Astrid shown her true colors, her true annoyance aimed towards me. It was only then did I realize she was

completely something else from what I expected. She wasn't the one I found _different - _she was just the complete opposite of me. The antithesis, the negation of my existence. I was the soft, tender throwing stick, she was the monstrous, _lawful_ Viking. She crushed skulls; I crushed my people's dignity.

Astrid should've been the Chief's child, the heir. I was nothing; I was _nothing. _

"I- I-" I stuttered, waving my hands around in desperation.

"Our parents' war is about to become ours! Figure out which side you're on."

And the only two things in my mind were her comments and one particular word that I sort of scoffed at - she said _parents, _plural. There was some sort of grim merriment at the ironic choice of words, but the hilarity in that instantly died.

Silence reigned from the skies. Blood leaked out from my mouth, so I wiped it off.

I was wordless. I stuttered at first, but I found but one response to her questions.

"You know, you're right," I silently said, nodding my head subtly in agreement, "I am useless."

A hole was left inside of me. The gate was already open, so I took my chance to leave before anything else embarrassing happened.

I looked back with a quick glance. Astrid looked remorseful, but turned away quickly. The perfect Viking has no feelings. She wouldn't let such feeble human flaws interrupt her goals.

I let loose a long sigh, slouching my arms backward as I gradually came to a stop and allow the breeze to blow into my face as I reconsidered my future actions. Storming pointlessly out of the arena only did nothing for me, so my mind decided to think, for a second, what else to do.

_Remember that dragon? _it rang.

* * *

><p>The leaves crunching beneath my feet as well as the rustling of leaves, along with the more prominent breathing, created a relaxing curtain of sensations that brought peace to me. I honestly never liked home - being away in the forests was where the true beauty of Berk lay. I took my time stumbling over to the cove so that I might gape at nature's fortune...and to avoid branches and what other obstacles I'd rather avoid.<p>

I halted at the edge of the cove. The gentle rustling of the trees gave way to the afternoon sunlight, which gleamed heavenly lights over nature. There was a distant chirping of birds, and the calm splashing of the nearby waterfall, and they all created an ensemble of peaceful sounds.

You're just a waste of space.

Astrid's voice kept slashing at me from no where, but there was nothing I could physically do to stop it. Other than doing something stupid, of course. Like visiting the dragon, _of course. _

I dropped the objects that I held in my hands: the shield first, then some raw, fish that would always annoy me with its disgusting sounds every time it got sloshed around, on top of it, not wanting to directly contaminate it with the relatively dry dirt.

Yes, a shield - the very one that Gobber had so kindly assured me would stand against the breath of every _well-known _dragon. And fish, so that I could feed the beast, _feed it. _Doing something stupid wasn't hard of a task for me to accomplish, and I believed myself to be rather good at it.

I turned around, facing my back at the cove, and began to lower myself off the edge of the cove, using my hands, once knowing I'm secured, to grab the objects that I had brought with me.

_Why the hell are you here in the first place? _my mind resumed.

I lowered myself gently down the rocks, cautiously, watching the crevices in which I placed my foot to ensure complete harness.

The dragon, meanwhile, wasn't there. Or wasn't in my view, at least. An awkward sadness engulfed me as this peculiar feeling lingered in my mind, telling me that I suspected as well.

The dragon's hiding. It knows you have returned.

Navigating the rocks with extreme caution, I dropped down heavily, especially with the fish and the dagger adding to my weight. I hid between the rocks, hoping I could find the dragon visible from there.

Nothing to be seen.

I threw the fish a few feet in front of me, hoping that it would trigger the beast's untamed hunger and bring him out of the shadows. Everything remained still; no dragon appeared from anywhere.

I slid my way through, only managing to get my shield stuck between the two rocks in the process. I attempted to pull it out, but it was all in vain. I sighed then shrugged, marveling at the amazing piece of work I had created.

So much for bringing the shield.

I glanced around for a quick moment, checking to see if any enormous monster was about to pounce on my back. Having checked my surroundings, not having seen a sign of the dragon's presence other than its scales and trail marks, I improvised.

I'll just have the fish protect me.

I bent over to pick up the fish through its gills, sticking my fingers in between its viscous interior, holding it out in front of me like a shield. I cursed silently at myself for having thought of such outlandish ingenuity.

I moved along eagerly, hoping to meet the dragon. I looked around me as I was left unprotected and vulnerable in the open field.

I paused my trance in utter shock, right at the border of the lake, shivering somewhat at the sight of my dearest friend.

There, I saw it, hiding behind a rock with its wing spanned in all of its majestic glory. It looked territorial, glaring at me with a callous stare. It began to circle me, stopping across me parallel to the edge of the lake, and held its head at a cautious low.

Oh my...

My breathing began to grow out of control, and my chest jumped up and down in sizable measurements. I tried controlling my breath, slowing down the adrenaline that ran through my spine with a stable exercise of inhales and exhales.

It looked at me, then the fish in my hands as I extended my arm nervously to offer my sacrifice to the terrifying dragon. The creature's narrow pupils then adjusted to the size of plates, dropping its guard overall. The dragon cautiously approached me, taking small, soft steps and moving towards me and small increments as if it were tip-toeing.

I sacrificed the sake of my hand to feed the beast, holding it further out in front of me, expanding the distance in which I want the dragon to approach. I watched my mysterious companion with unwavering eyes, refusing to even blink for a second. The dragon did the same, eyeing me keenly as he opened his mouth.

But I forgot to remove my dagger, which was somewhat visible, hiding beneath my clothes. Only a small glimmer of it, just a tiny shine, and the dragon aroused itself yet again, causing me to retreat slightly as well.

He jumped back, showing his teeth, which previously, I noticed, weren't there. He growled murderously, having shown his fear for any sort of sharp objects. He had his share of Vikings, apparently.

I swallowed my throat as I proceeded to hold the dagger in my hands, to show that I wasn't going to hurt him. I gently picked up my dagger in a manner that showed I had no intentions of using it, and dropped it on the moist soil below. I kicked it aside, far enough that I may not reach for it.

The beast dropped his cover, his thin pupils now turning into full circles. He, once again, carefully approached me with his teeth retracted. My emotions flipped between curious and fearful.

I shivered nervously, and the beast, whose mouth was open wide to reveal his pink gums, flinched a little and slightly scoff in disgust upon smelling its horrendous breath.

The dragon was then toothless. _Toothless._

Its head still waved about as I made further observations, slightly astounded at the sight of such a demonic creation.

I'm waiting.

Two words, somehow _said_ by the dragon. But it didn't even speak at all. It was some sort of understandable silence, some sort of message sent through his eyes, through his minds. Perhaps it was his purring? His deep grumbling or groaning? Nevertheless, I instantly felt calmer, having the urge to speak to it, knowing that it could speak to me.

My curiosity then spoke.

"I could have sworn you had-"

It suddenly pulled out its teeth, and ripped the fish from my hand flawlessly. I slightly jumped at the dragon's abrupt movements, but I instantly calmed, finding that I had remained unscathed. I whimpered slightly, before continuing my thoughts.

"-teeth.." I finished.

I watched breathlessly in a still, surprised stance. I dared not to make a movement.

The dragon enjoyed its meal, swallowing it whole, making it disappear as some devilish witch would. Then he instantly darted at me, with the narrow eyes that, I learned, marked a sense of caution, a sense of hostility. I backed up, inadvertently tripping on myself, and continued attempting to crawl away further from the dragon. My back made contact with a rock, and I was fearful that any further attempts at a mistake would result in scorched pieces.

"I- I don't have any more!" I stuttered in renewed anxiety, tripping backwards.

But the dragon continued to stare into my face - until its eyes rolled and a vomiting noise originated from his throat. Out from his mouth came a regurgitated, half-eaten fish. _Literally half-eaten._ My hands were doused, carrying the disgustingly viscous gift my friend decided to give me. I looked at it, stumped.

The dragon slowly went into a sitting position, that mimicked mine, waiting for something to happen. I was confused at first, startled at how the dragon had so kindly repaid me for my unrequited generosity, but noticed the rapid movement in the dragon's eye: fish to me, fish to me. I knew what he wanted.

Well, eat it, it seemed to say.

I looked down at the dead fish before me, my hands having gotten accustomed to the saliva-covered feeling the fish had.

I sighed, and hesitantly, I bit into it. At that instant moment, I wanted to rip out my tongue and rinse it in the ocean. I hadn't swallowed it yet, but the dragon insisted as well. I obeyed the dragon and pretended to enjoy my share of the meal. I gave the dragon a deceptive smile.

The dragon looked confused, observing my face with deep interest. He later tried to replicate what I was doing.

It was then and there was I truly struck. A weak smile tore across the dragon's face, who struggled to hold it. It rose its ears as though it were requesting my approval in his attempt to recreate my awkward grin.

Touch it.

All of a sudden, I felt dizzy. The world's deadliest known dragon sits in front of me, and my mind drives me with a mad suggestion to _touch it. _A mental shrug, and I held out my hand nonetheless, wondering if it would allow me to touch it.

But its smile disappeared, its teeth were revealed, and it growled, only to fly across to the other side of the cove. A majestic flap of its wings, and it screeched loudly as it went across the cove to a resting spot, one that was placed under the overreaching branches of a towering conifer.

I began to trail after it, maintaining a line of sight. I quietly jogged across the rock-decorated shore of the cove, slowly creeping upon the desperate dragon. I saw it curl around its sleeping spot, taking notice of a chirping bird that departed from its nest. Immediately, I took the chance and sat mere steps away from it, only to be greeted with a face turned upset upon seeing me. I waved a greeting, and the dragon felt even more annoyed. It sighed, rolling its eyes, and made an attempt to cover its face with the wing attached to its tail.

Leave me alone.

The dragon ignored me, and it gave me all-the-more urgency to just _touch it. _ And so, I took my chance, extending my nervously shivering arms, being silent as possible. But, damn, did that dragon have keen senses.

Instantly, it dropped its tail and saw me attempting to touch him, raising its head and groaned interrogatively.

What the hell are you doing?

I retracted my arm, instantly getting onto my feet and awkwardly walking away, pretending as if I were innocent. I remained stiff as I departed.

The dragon snorted and left to rest elsewhere, dragging its tail along with him. I whirled around as I watched him hang himself over by a tree with his tail, sleeping soundly like a toddler in its cradle.

* * *

><p>Knowing that I no longer wanted to go home, I hung about at the cove, watching the sun as it dragged itself down and below the wall of trees that obscured the rest of the world from view. A sniff of the cool breeze would numb my nose, but fill my lungs with a refreshing feeling that my body enjoyed. Doing nothing but being stuck for hours on end forced me to resort to primitive forms of entertainment. I began drawing pictures on the dirt, things that instantly came to mind. The dragon slept for the remainder of the afternoon, and I watched it curiously, exchanging my eyes between the

dragon, the sunset, and my drawing.<p>

My mind knew where it wanted to be: then and there. Home no longer was home to me; there was nothing there I ever looked forward to. But with the dragon about, he was probably the only reason for me to stay. So that I might look after him.

I drew his face on the dirt, my surroundings now reflecting the sun's tangy red-orange light.

A groan stirred from behind me; I hadn't notice the dragon was awake. My eyes widened at his unexpected advent, but I remained still. Though surprised, I kept drawing, finishing the rough dirt-sketch of the vile beast. And then he warbled pleasingly, but ventured off elsewhere, looking for a drawing tool of its own.

A torn down tree.

The roots of it dangled with loose dirt that would occasionally drop downwards and land with the moist sod, distinguishable by its remarkably darker shade of brown. He dragged it along in random circles and patterns, leaving me clueless as to what he was trying to achieve. He whipped around, spinning recklessly, and even occasionally smacking me against the top of my head. The pain didn't bother me; I was just amazed by the dragon's similarly driven curiosity.

He later stopped, tossing the trunk aside, and took a second to marvel at his masterpiece, nodding in approval at his own work. My head was twisted in confusion, and being in the middle of it all, I tried getting out of it.

Accidentally, I stepped on his drawing. The dragon was angered, but as I lifted my foot, it groaned happily. I stepped on it once more, wanting to play with the dragon; it easily lost its temper. I lifted it again; it calmed, the pupils of his eyes turning from something utterly horrid to something so peaceful and charming. I stepped down, yet again, wanting to see if the dragon understood the point in my seemingly irritating actions, and this time, the dragon looks as if he were going to tear me in pieces.

I finally decided to lose it altogether, giving up in my attempts to interact furthermore with the dragon. I did my best to avoid stepping on the dragon's crude drawing, to avoid angering the dangerous beast. I could tell I looked foolish from a distance, dancing in a trance like a lonely lover, gracefully arching my legs and feet over the lines on the ground. My mind was busied with worry at the possibility of having ruined the dragon's artwork, so when I was conveniently face to face with the notorious killer, having avoided disrupting the dirt any longer, I cowered slightly.

An extremely radical, suicidal thought struck me. The very same impulse that had occurred to me mere hours before:

Touch it.

I began arguing with myself, re-examining my thoughts.

Am I really that godsdamned stupid?

I was hesitant at first, to jeopardize my hand and lay it between its eyes, since the dragon had shown signs of distrust and desire for personal space. At first, I bored into his eyes as I exposed my limb, but the dragon growled softly, revealing its sharp, retractable teeth, warning me of the consequences to come if I kept up with my foolishness any longer.

I tried again, but instead, I turned my head away from the beast, putting my trust in him. What was actually seconds seemed like hours as I waited a seemingly immeasurable amount of time for the moment of truth to come.

I felt something, a tangible object touched my hand; I cringed naturally, wanting to suddenly jerk my hand back in fear. But I knew it would only anger the my friend. I prepared for the worst, later opening my eyes to find that the dragon had volunteered itself. That it had laid itself into my palm.

I watched it open its eyes as well, only to shake in realization. Its eyes widened, its head jolting backwards in a revelation, reminding himself that we were different, that I was a human and he was a dragon; and we stared at each other before he departed, silent as a shadow.

The sun's last light had already faded away, and I lingered back to the village, questions among questions on my mind. And I couldn't help but wonder.

The Night Fury. Known for haunting the town with its vast strategic intelligence and its shadow-like virtue. Infamous for killing dozens of people and injuring hundreds more. But how ironic to think it was, that, even after doing all those horrific things, he was probably the only one who was ever humane to me. That, in this proclaimed demon, in the wings of the vile, he was my only friend.

It was saddening for me to think that my society would never tolerate such relationship with such an outsider, even if the other half of that relationship were the other extreme outsider of their community. That the only friendship I could ever form was a forbidden one. That all I had was a forbidden friendship.

Regardless, a tiny simper spread across my face at one thought that I couldn't let go of.

I didn't have to care if the dragon was never going to be accepted, that if I had to keep it a secret. There was just one simple fact. One fact that I couldn't help but think gleefully of.

I stared down at my right hand, the very same one that just graced the snout of a Night Fury, and keenly observed it with the deepest of interest. The weirder thing was: I wasn't looking for anything.

Just that thought.

The dragon was my friend.

Only finally did the ghost of Astrid's faded voice finish her final line.

Figure out which side you're on.

* * *

><p>The town was still; hardly any houses were lit. The winds were calm, and the moon shined brightly over the ghostly town. I walked, lonely, between the empty houses, reaching the base in which the destroyed catapult stood. Gobber sat, along with the other kids, at the top of its base, their faces lit with a bright orange ambiance of a greatly lit fireplace.<p>

I was hungry, and not wanting to cook again, so I decided to eat with them briefly. Already surrounding the fire that they had started, the group was in the midst of a busy conversation.

I snuck in and found myself a seat, and was thankful that I hadn't been noticed. A leg of meat had been spared for me, and Gobber handed it over while he continued to speak.

"It was not long before another one took my arm."

A story about how Gobber became half man, half machine. The group was astounded, looking as if what they were hearing was not true at all. They all gasped in bewilderment. I didn't - my father had told me the story a couple of times.

Snotlout's voice rang out, "I promise to avenge your lost limbs! I'll tear off each and every dragon's leg I find!" He made a pause, then continued pointlessly. "With my face!" he finished, gesturing at his face with his fingers.

Gobber disagreed, pulling out the leg of a roasted chicken and waving it in the air to emphasize its importance. "It's the wings you really want. A downed dragon is a dead dragon."

Again, the students raised their voices. But the teacher hushed them seconds later, and spoke word of important news.

"I've got some important news," he began.

He cleared his throat before proceeding, "Though some of you haven't been able to attend all our lessons," he spoke, eyeing me for a brief second, "the elimination will begin tomorrow, as originally planned."

The elimination; the team of young teens are set to fight dragons in the arena, each of them getting progressively harder as they go along. Each round, the elderly council will select a person who has done the worst, in comparison to the others, and is chosen to be eliminated. And the same goes against for the next round, and so on. The winner gets the honor of fighting a Nightmare, one to one, and killing it before the town.

Under the assumption that the last standing contestant is able to kill one.

"Death results in immediate disqualification," Gobber said grimly, staring into the fire.

I sighed in distress, knowing that I was completely unprepared, having missed numerous training sessions that could possibly

contribute to my survival factor in the arena. _If _I had any to begin with.

But I didn't worry that much; my mind instantly wandered off with another occupation that rang in my mind. Gobber's words: a downed dragon is a dead dragon. A _dead _dragon.

_I didn't want the dragon to die, now did I? _my mind said.

It was alarming to me, really, and I my eyes stared deeply into the face of the cracking fire. I left my food, a large leg of chicken from which I had only taken a few small bites, and vanished before Gobber was finished with his announcements. I ran down the steps as softly as I could, balancing myself on my toes to disappear like a ghost; no one even paid attention to my departure, but that was what I wanted to achieve anyways.

The stars were undeniably beautiful, and they glimmered upon us like a sign of good fortune. _I wasn't lonely after all._

I was reignited with a feeling that I haven't truly felt in years. A feeling that was lost in the depths of memory, in pessimism.

The mere fact that I had been alone my entire life made this feeling more prominent. It was that feeling, that after having been transparent for almost a decade, I was recognized again.

* * *

><p>A long piece of parchment was set on my table over at the smithy. No one knew I was there, and I planned on leaving it that way. I was to be discreet.<p>

I stared at the writing surface, pondering as to what to do first, spinning my writing utensil in my hands, still determining my actions. It was going to be a long night. I went through my notes and made a rough sketch of its lost tail wing.

He was my only friend, and for being that, I had to repay him. I began designing my gift to the dragon, one that would revive his abilities to fly like a god.

I grabbed an iron rod and hung it over the fire, leaving it there as I went under the cabinets to grab myself a rusty, old hammer. The fire was going to remain heated for some time. The movements of my tools clanged against each other, alongside with the repetitive popping of firewood.

These were noises that I thought in, the noises that I slept to. It was my profession, and I loved doing what I could do.

I held onto the iron rod and placed it against the upwards face of an anvil, and began pounding against the metallic object.

I was designing him a wing.

* * *

><p>AN: Sorry that the updates are taking long. I hope you enjoyed this chapter! Please leave a review.

4. See You Tomorrow

****See You Tomorrow****

* * *

><p>"Toothless!" I called out.<p>

It was probably the only name I could ever find suitable for him, and the dragon seemed to appreciate his new title.

Yeah, that dragon was then a _him. _I knew it was a him " it was just one of those situations where you could determine with one look.

The dragon was in plain sight, but was too busy staring at the walls behind him, looking eager to find a way out of this natural cage.

A chance to try out his new wing was all that I was excited for. With the weather so calm and fair, the slight breeze rustling the swiftly blooming trees, and the thymes, I saw, were taming the wild mountains, the sky glowing with a beautiful, gloomy heather, there was no better chance for me to try out my newly crafted gift.

"Toothless!"

I had hauled along with me a huge basket of raw fish, a woven creel more than half my size, and luckily enough, no one had even spotted me fleeing with it. I did my best to cover my tracks as I struggled lugging the thing around like a dead body.

All the while I had to carry along with me yet another, rather heavy object. Toothless' new wing was safely tucked beneath my arms.

The dragon finally turned its attention towards me, it's face showing no signs of surprise, but instead, happiness.

Viking, you returned!

My return seemed to lighten his mood, as he would with mine.

I clapped my hands in relief, sighing and congratulating myself for having managed to hoist the massive crate around. I kicked against the package, spilling its contents onto the floor before the furious dragon, whose eyes rose and grew with approval upon seeing such a lovely sight.

He also darted his head back in confusion.

How did you carry that?

I ignored him, somewhat smirking at the dragon's rather good question. My mind repeated the same thing.

Yeah, how did you carry that?

I responded with a silent shrug and entirely disregarded the question

anyway.

"There ya' go..."

The dragon was starving, and its need to fulfill its hunger led him to eagerly approach the pile of fish. However, his zeal brought his attention to a previously unnoticed eel.

Toothless darted his head back with hateful eyes, a deep growl attempting to intimidate the already dead creature.

I instantly went to deal with the situation, not wanting to anger the dragon and possibly inadvertently cause my death.

_Get that thing away from me! _the dragon seemed to say.

He continued hissing with a sense of hostility, narrowing its pupils as I knew it would.

I hastily threw it to a safe distance, into the lake, and the dragon resumed his meal, pretending as if nothing had happened at all. He began nudging the pile of fish and selected the ones that he liked.

"I never really liked eel either," I said, wiping the viscous liquid obtained from the eel from my hands.

With the dragon busied with his sizable meal, I quietly scuttled to his side, then behind him, trying to display some sort of innocence regardless of the dragon's lack of attention to me.

"Don't mind me...just creeping up behind you...nothing suspicious..."

The dragon continued gulping down fish, carefully choosing the order in which he ate.

Once at the dragon's tail, I kneeled down and opened the wing, readying it. Whether or not it disturbed the dragon wasn't my first concern. Getting the damn thing on was my first priority.

At first, I was careful with the straps, carefully tracing the lace around Toothless so that he would not be panicked. Unfortunately, the dragon's tail had this natural sense of my presence, and whenever I would get mere fingers' worth to it, it would shift away from me, making the situation all the more frustrating.

I nudged myself closer once again, and the tail flew into my face.

"It's okay, bud!" I assured Toothless, who seemed to have no complete control over his tail; in fact, he was still busying himself with food.

I sat on the dragon, hoping that my weight â€" more like lack of â€" would serve as a valid staple. Nonetheless, I was still unable to manage the little circumstance I was dealing with.

I glued myself and arranged my body in a manner that allowed me to work in peace.

_Godsdamn finally, _my mind cheered.

The strap was around and tightened, and I reopened the wing once again, from its disturbed, ruffled state. I slouched my shoulders back and once again clapped my hands as a sign of self-congratulation. only to turn around in slight confusion, to see that Toothless had his wings open, prompt for flight.

My moment of satisfaction instantly fell upon a realization.

"Oh sh-"

A single powerful flap of the wings, one that sounded like a boom, and we were in the air. I hung tightly onto the tail, hugging it with an eternal grip. My stomach lurched up and into my throat, and I felt as if my body were about to tear into pieces.

_But I was no coward " _well, perhaps I was, but not in this situation. I didn't shut my eyes in utter fear as any Viking would, used to planting their feet against the moist dirt or the deck of a burning ship. No, I embraced this glorious feeling. It was just this spectacular perception, one of both excitement and pure adrenaline, a sort of excitement that's of a better league than _fighting _dragons.

My mind then broke free from its heavenly sensations upon noticing one peculiar aspect of the situation " the wing flapped about unsteadily, curling and folding so that it remained closed. Instantly did the effects occur. The dragon lost all control of maintaining its altitude and began to drop at a steep angle. The dragon screamed, and I began to panic as well.

I extended my arms and grabbed onto the edge of the wing, pulling it away from the spine so that it remained open. The dragon maintained flight, and regained his former flight path, climbing higher and tilting at confusing angles.

And I marveled at my work, keeping the wing open with my right hand, yelling in complete exhilaration:

"Ha, ha! It worked!"

Toothless kept on turning, flying back and again over the cove, probably enjoying his renewed abilities to remain in flight.

But my yelling reminded him of one thing: I was on his tail.

Oh, no dragon should ever be dependent, especially on their life-sworn enemies, especially on _Vikings. _And this Night Fury was not ready to accept that he should need one.

He flung me off his tail with a violent, sudden swing, thinking that his freedom could be maintained without my presence. However, with my flimsy body off and flying about the leather-and-metal fin which I had made to replace the flesh-and-bone, the one I had shorn-off, now fluttered uselessly in the breeze produced from the speed of flight, and the dragon took the same flight path as I did: straight down. Fortunately, the lake was right below us, and it cushioned our landing. A huge splash, and I resurfaced from the water, gaining my

breath from such brief moment of a heavenly experience. Toothless did the same, screaming as he went down.

I was far too joyful to feel angry at Toothless' attempt to get rid of me.

"Yeah!" was all I could yell out.

My excitement gradually died down as I watched Toothless tried getting back up on his feet. He wobbled around his rather short limbs uncontrollably before managing to whirl himself back up.

I began walking towards the shore closest to him, managing to tip toe on the floor of the lake.

Toothless looked around, observing his surroundings, before his eyes set their views upon the defined colors of a floating eel carcass, the very same one that I had cleansed the dragon's food of.

My friend screeched, its eyes growing wide with fear, its "ears" raised timidly, panicking, and gracelessly stormed out of the lake.

`_Help! Helphelphelphelp_`

I sighed as I watched the dragon belligerently evacuating the area, walking over to the dead eel and lifting it off the water surface with my hands, somewhat disgusted at the sight.

It seemed useless, indeed. But sometimes it is the useless things in life that later become the ones most needed.

* * *

><p>Gobber pulled down the lever to reveal the next nasty beast in line: the Zippleback.<p>

As opposed to other dragons, this two-headed creature could breathe a flammable gas with one head, and light it up with the other, allowing the dragon to ambush its victims with gas that the uninformed and foolish could mistakenly take for fog.

Luckily, Gobber tasked us with facing such a hellish situation. The only way to prevent our deaths: drench the dragon head in water, one of the few ways a warrior can prevent his adversary from burning him to ashes.

Equipped with nothing but the sight of mere steps away and rather burdening buckets of water, I tried to sharpen my senses to spot the malevolent and stealthy dragon.

Instantly I had lost all sight of the others, the colored fume having invaded and blinded my vision. I cowered behind Fishlegs, who was fortunately behind me.

The very fact that he was muttering about the Zippleback's preferred method of digestion didn't calm me down. It drove me insane.

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"...injects venom for pre-digestion..!"
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He only stopped under my desperate whisper:

"Could you please stop it!?"

I shook my head as my attention turned towards an invisible scene ahead, where the familiar arguing of the twins erupted, followed by the sudden, terrified yelling of Tuffnut.

It was only then did the impenetrable fog begin clearing itself, the dim sunlight managing to scarcely break through.

Its silhouette became recognizable from where Fishlegs and I stood, and, for whatever reason, I led the the attack against the dragon's untamed wrath. My unlikely pairing followed me as we met with the wild beast.

The others were retreating, having no bucket of water with which they would be able to disable the dragon's ability to burn them to ashes.

With our distance having closed, the dragon's two heads were now face to face with us. They seemed to chuckle at the cowardly kids that were running like headless beasts of their own. I couldn't help but agree; they were intimidating already.

Fishlegs, having suddenly gained the lead, took the first attempt at throwing the water. But it was because of the very fact that both heads were damn-near identical that he drenched the wrong head, instead angering it. Both.

It growled bitterly, and knowing that he had failed to reach his goal, Fishlegs ran with his arms in the air, yelling like a little boy.

I was left alone to face the beast; knowing which head was which, I ran up to my opponent and threw the water into its face.

Attempted to, at least. The contents of my bucket fell hopelessly short and, instead, splattered all over on the ground before my feet.

Ah, well, my mind shrugged. The only thing I was able to do after my embarrassing maneuver was to cower under the bucket, foolishly thinking that it would serve to protect me. A frown was taped on my face, disappointed at my inability to _throw a bucket of water.

—

Both dragon heads snapped at me, and I fell back in terror for it was the only impulse that came to mind.

The mundane Gobber yelled in fear of my death again:

"Hiccup!"

_Time to try it ou__t__, _my mind suggested, referring to the awkward bulging item hidden inside my vest.

I slightly revealed the interior of my extremely furry coat-thing,

where I had disgustingly hid an eel for the sake of testing purposes. I did my best not to reveal the object inside, not wanting the others to know the secret that was supposedly 'mine.'

Instantly, the dragon snarled and lunged back, slowly retreating as I held my hand up and pushed them away with what seemed to be an invisible force, under my influence. I continued stepping forward, oblivious to the sudden amazement appearing on the others' faces.

The dragon scoured into its nest, hugging the walls in unmitigated fright, peering, with angry eyes, at the slight sight of an already-dead eel.

I closed the bulky doors with the rest of my strength, knowing that the dragons wouldn't dare make an attempt to escape. The eel acted as my bodyguard, and it was still with me.

A huge bump, then I clapped my hands in a discreet, personal congratulations to myself, only to turn around to find a series of perplexed faces staring at me, their eyes gleaming with an appreciative astonishment.

My eyes locked nervously, and I gestured my way out as I spoke in a voice that attempted to hide its awkwardness.

"Well...better get going...ya' know..."

The whole lot kept staring at me as I vacated myself from the arena, running like hell. As distance grew between the secluded part of the island and me, I smiled to myself, knowing all the greater things to come.

I left before I could find out who was disqualified, whom I later learned to be Fishlegs.

My patience had waited long enough, and it was finally paying off. Good things were to come.

* * *

><p>I kept on running, finally arriving at the workshop and closing the door vigorously behind me as I entered.<p>

I bent over, leaning my hands on my knees to catch my breath.

I looked up and around me, seeing the loads of sketches of previously rough designs of the wing that I had decided to give Toothless.

I made my way to my desk, the stool still in the middle of the room from the last time I had perched there, and settled myself down. I still scanned around for something to do, which was quite a lot. And I knew, just for the sheer love of it, that I must complete working on the dragon's wing.

From underneath my desk, I pulled out a leather seat-like pad which I had worked on in my younger years, thinking that we could ride the sheep to safety.

I heard of such leather seats existing on the mainland. Something

called a "saddle," used for horses. I've never ever seen a horse in my life, but my father told me a lot about them.

"If the horse likes you, and if you like the horse, it will let you ride him."

As one of the great thinkers of my town, I suspected that the same rule would go with dragons. It was just a rough guess, but I wasn't afraid to experiment.

My subtle, ever-present grin grew wider, and a mode of passion fell over me.

I took the saddle with me and began working on it, piercing and threading through it with needles and strings.

Working yet another full-time overnight job. No sleep. All just for the sake of visiting my friend the next day. My one and only friend.

* * *

><p>I met with Toothless again, who all-too-well that I would be dragging more things with me. And ,as I struggled to lug around the cargo, the dragon just ran away from me, forcing me to chase after him.<p>

"Come back 'ere!" I groaned in fatigue.

He'd just smile gleefully, tongue waving out, and pounce around like a little child.

I was only able to calm him down with the big basket of fish which I later made visible to Toothless' desperate stomach.

While he kept busy, I outfitted my friend with the leather seat. The saddle fit well; sitting atop Toothless was essentially a cycle of sitting, flying, then thudding into the packed dirt and having the air violently expelled from my lungs. It was after a long time of this endless repeat, my hands, just as brown as my shirt and unable to remove any dirt as they just added more, that Toothless finally acquiesced to my sitting on him

* * *

><p>A string? Toothless questioned.

"A rope," I remarked.

Even better.

I nodded at Toothless' response to my ludicrous solution to the flaws in the present I had given him. I gestured to the wing, then to myself, saying as I went along:

"I'll hold it, and a little...you know, pull, and I'll be able to control it."

Toothless gave me a rather anxious warble and rolled his eyes, laying his head against the heavenly pasture as I went about, tying myself

to a dragon.

"I'm pretty sure this idea will work," I assured the disapproving creature with a slight sense of hesitation in my voice.

* * *

><p>I crossed the name Fishlegs though in my journal, looking at it with a sense of pride.<p>

_Hey! I wasn't the first to get out, _my mind cheered delightfully.

I looked up from the interior of my book to find that Toothless had finished devouring yet another meal.

I got up clumsily, speaking as I went along.

"You know, I don't know how we'd be able to remain in the air with you eating _that much_."

I gestured my hands towards three, once-filled, baskets that smelled of rotting fish, lying on the ground, tipped over.

Toothless turned away, wanting to ignore my babbling.

* * *

><p>We glided over the lake, hoping to the gods that witnessed our foolishness that it works. The walls of the cove approached closer and closer, and it was only seconds before impact did I tug at the wing to force a tilt and a turn.<p>

Perhaps I pulled the string too hard.

Toothless let out a horrible screech and curved violently and suddenly to the left, while I was thrown off his back and into the cold water below.

Ah, sh-

A boom filled my ears, interrupting my mental cries, and I resurfaced to find Toothless having crashed in the grass.

A shake of the head, then he turned to look at me with eyes filled with condemnation.

"It could work..." I shrugged.

* * *

><p>I was back at the workshop, once again, adding more to the saddle for the purposes of my own safety.<p>

I picked at the rope that hooked onto the saddle and wrapped around me to test its constriction. I grinned upon the promising sight of the saddle not having given way to my utterly feeble pulls.

"Oi!"

I jumped at the sudden bellow, followed by a constant bombardment of heavy knocking, of my mentor.

"What are ye doin' there?"

I desperately tried unhooking the saddle from my vest as the door managed to break open. Gobber took a step inside as his head banged against the ceiling repeatedly. There was no time, so I took the saddle, threw it on my seat, and promptly sat on it as the two-limbed workshop vigilante was finally able to face me.

"Wha' is th - ow! - that?" he asked curiously, pointing his metal hand at the saddle under me.

"Oh! It's uh..."

"And why are you attached to it...?"

I shifted nervously as I looked for an answer. There was an awkward silence as my mind attempted to fabricate a response.

"It's a pad to keep me from falling off my seat! Yep, that's it!"

I nodded my head frightfully, thinking that Gobber easily looked through my lies.

Which made it all-the-more surprising when he took the answer seriously.

"Ah! I see!" he said, chuckling. "You workin' all night long, susceptible to fallin' asleep..."

His voice gradually died down as he shook his head in approval. I watched him with frightful eyes as I waited for him to depart. My lungs stopped breathing; my heart stopped pumping.

"Okay, good night! Or... morning!" he greeted, whirling around as he exited the building with the same violent manner in which he had entered.

I slouched both my shoulders forward, letting out a long sigh and releasing all the tension that almost caused my stomach to explode.

My mind questioned my farcical response. _It's a pad to keep you from fall of your seat?_

I nodded to myself.

And to think that he actually bought it?

* * *

><p>Toothless was able to make a brief turn without the need of expanding his tail wings, which was fortunate since I was struggling with the rope tied around my feet.<p>

I tugged hard on my leg, but it was insufficient. It served to be utterly useless as the rope would just wave about in the wind, counteracting the forces of my considerably weak leg.

Toothless tilted to the left, flying around the cove. I looked behind me to see and make sure if everything went according to plan.

The wing was unable to deploy.

Ah, this idea won't work, I thought.

I found a sensible landing spot, and turned Toothless to such a direction. The dragon didn't seem too fond of where we were arriving, and let out some sort of shout before landing against the soft meadow, bordering the cliffs of the cove.

I conveniently slid off of Toothless' back and into a walking stance, running and gradually halting to a stop.

I turned around to confront an unusual noise, one that I had never heard before, and saw the Night Fury, in all of its claimed iniquity, to be dancing around the grass, rolling over to the left and right, seeming to be laughing uncontrollably.

I stood still, looking stumped at the dragon's jest, who was being gleefully tortured by the tall grass that surrounded him.

I began smacking specimens of the very same grass off my fur vest, and held them in my hand. I tucked them neatly inside an interior compartment of mine and approached Toothless so that I might save him from his demise.

* * *

><p>I stared into the piece of grass in my hands, the background having lost its focus because of my attention to it.<p>

Then something else caught my lenses; my eyes flickered upward and adjusted their attention to the Gronckle, hovering about as it sought victims.

There it went, bumping into people with its relatively large mass and volume; those who would get in the way would easily be knocked back more than a couple houses' worth. A few broken ribs and one less competitor would remain.

While the others ran mindlessly, Gobber was sound asleep by the cage's door, the one that had held the loose dragon.

I cowered behind cover, as did the majority of the teens. I watched Snotlout get pummeled violently into the wall behind him from a distance. The cracking of the bones was prominent amongst the screaming of kids and the growling of the dragon.

"Ah!" he cried upon impact.

Then the Gronckle laid its sights at me, it's eyes narrowed with fury as it began chasing me down.

I stood my ground, and I looked at the patch of grass in my hands with doubt before reluctantly holding it in front of me, thinking the small green blades would act as a viable shield.

Fortunately, they did.

The Gronckle came to a stop as I braced myself for impact. I opened my eyes to stare in the eyes of bewilderment, the dragon having stopped and taken a big sniff of my magical herbs.

It seemed to grin, it's irises having grown larger before falling into a mystical sleep against the floor. A large thud, and I marveled at my work.

Gobber woke up from his snore upon the sudden shaking of the ground, and alarmingly got onto his feet.

"Eh? What was that!?" he deliberately asked, scanning his sights for a sign of danger.

He turned his eyes towards me in utter perplexity, a face that at which all I could do was grin. All he could presume was that I had claimed the beast into a submission of defeat.

* * *

><p>It was no surprise that most of the others wouldn't find anything peculiar about this victory of mine, trailing and surrounding me as we walked across the bridge back to the main island. To me, they seemed like idiots, complete _idiots. _Despite their obliviousness to my rapid change in abilities, I enjoyed their ovation. They all cheered, asking me a series of questions that gave me no time to answer.

"How did you do that?" Snotlout asked.

"I-" I stuttered.

"What's the secret?" Tuffnut barked.

"I-" I tried again.

"How-"

For the sake of separating myself from the aroused crowd of teens, I stopped in my tracks, and whirled around, making an excuse while I could, cutting off the most recent question in the midst of it being asked. The entire group split in half, caused by my sudden stall, and turned around to face me, _most _of them with smiles of amazement on their faces.

"I forgot my...uh...ax. Yep, that's it! I'll see you...!"

The others took my excuse as a valid one, and left me to be as they continued making their way towards the town. It was only when they had lost interest in my departure, when they were finished watching my distance grow apart from theirs, did I only slow down to a steady hike.

"...tomorrow," I later finished.

I watched my back, every now and then, hoping that someone wouldn't take notice of my sudden change in direction into the forest.

I took notice of a grumpy figure, one of skinny but dominant stature, one of blonde hair, one with blue, furious eyes.

She looked at me with a hateful stare, but I didn't care. A witness of my awkward deviation from my original path wouldn't be enough for one to accuse me of actually 'housing' a dragon.

Seemed to me, though, Astrid was smarter than that.

* * *

><p>It was morning once again, and there was nothing else I would do other than visit my lost and lonely friend that lurked about in the uncharted cove.<p>

I found Toothless being irritably disturbed, and when he discovered my presence, he called out for help with his wild wailing.

In his seemingly pointless series of warbles and desperate purrs, I deciphered:

Viking! I feel - ah! - funny!

It was a bizarre choice of words, but I understood what he was trying to tell me.

The dragon was attempting to rub unreachable parts of his body with his paws. I rolled my eyes as I went to save Toothless from yet another dreadful fate.

I began scratching around his neck, as he desperately tried reaching them with his feet.

But my doing seemed to make matters worse. As I scratched, Toothless had the tendency to twitch and perform uncontrollable, peculiar body movements.

His head tilted, he raised two of his limbs in the air, and his wings unfolded, before I scratched below his neck, which ultimately downed the beast.

I watched him lay there, a smile seeming to appear on his face, then looked at my hands, a sudden epiphany having struck me.

* * *

><p>Astrid threw the ax as her last attempt to slay yet another Nadder, which was charging at both Astrid and I.<p>

The ax was easily glanced off with the hard structure of the Nadder's spikes, the ones that appeared from head to tail.

Astrid instinctively rolled away as the Nadder continued its avenue, leaving me behind to be the dragon's preferable target.

I remained perfectly still, knowing that the Nadder would be confused as to whether I was an inanimate object or not. Surely, it broke its rush, and halted right in front of me. Its nostrils breathed into my face, observing me with the keenest of its visions, yet, unable to determine whether I was an enemy or not. I couldn't help but feel

slightly disgusted.

I then took notice of an insane lady, screaming her war-cries, charging at us.

_Ah, crap, _I thought.

As time dwindled for me to handle the situation, I desperately whirled my head around in search for an answer. I was resorted to only one option.

And I wasn't hesitant when it came to scratching the lower side of the beast's neck.

It was enough to stun the dragon, who also broke into an uncontrollable seizure, laughing with its croaky dragon voice, before finally falling into the floor, still as a dead animal.

Astrid paused before the dragon's still corpse, her ax raised in the air, a priceless look of bewilderment appearing on her face.

"Huh!?" she cried, nearly out of breath.

The other contestants, either already disqualified or too busy hiding in unthinkable places, appeared and watched as the dragon laid happily asleep, instantly knowing that it was I who had brought it down.

I looked up and around the arena, to find the audience, especially Gobber, surprised, and impressed, with my victory. A cheer abruptly erupted from the crowds.

* * *

><p>All I ever wanted was a bowl of soup that the chef has so kindly prepared for my victories. I remembered him personally congratulating me after I had left the arena, and he promised, "I'll fix you up a nice bowl of soup, ye'?"<p>

I hastily accepted his generous offer, then pledged to be there by that night.

So there I was, searching for a table and waiting for the chef's kind service to arrive. My eyes convened with the chef's, and he gestured towards an empty table, knowing that I'd rather isolate myself from the other residents of the town.

I settled myself on the wooden table as the chef brought to my his marvelous bowl of soup; a large bowl, in fact. I greeted him with thanks as I nodded in gratitude, before digging into the humungous serving of "clam chowder," as the chef would like to call it.

A sudden uprising of commotion disrupted my sense of seclusion, and I looked up to find a crowd of both younglings and elders coming to approach me.

The comments came along and bombarded me with all their flattery:

"Great job, Hiccup!"

"Hiccup, ye'll grow to be the best in the town!"

"How'd ya like the title of 'Dragon Slayer,' eh?"

A moderately painful smack on the back, and I somewhat cringed at its surge of irritation.

"Yeah, thanks guys," was all I could say. I was honestly annoyed.

My sights met with an angry pair of blue eyes, glaring at me with an immeasurable amount of hatred. A violent slam of the table before the blonde-haired demon stormed out of the main hall. My eyes continued tracing her before my vision was broken by even more fans.

* * *

><p>The bells ran across the rooftops in the midst of the morning sun, which gleamed its heavenly light all over the seemingly busy town.<p>

"Ships! Four in sight!"

The entire village seemed to instantly rush to the edge of the cliffs, the ones that faced the lower docks. I was walking to the workshop anyway, so I decided to see what all the fuss was about.

It was barely in view, but as I cupped my hands over my eyes to attain clearer vision, that was a small fleet of four ships, having parted from a larger group, heading directly for Berk.

"They're attacking!" a familiar voice yelled out. "It's Chief Olrik! What a little dog, eh!"

It was the drunk, the one that sang such hate-inflicting song to me.

The crowd was immediately aroused at such outlandish idea.

"No, you idiot!" Gobber shouted back as he began making his way down to the docks. "He's wearing' the white flag! He's payin' us a visit!"

"We're deemed exiles! Outcasts! What the hell would they want from us?" another man cried out, somewhat agreeing with the drunk's claim.

"Oh, shut up ye' fools!" Gobber screamed back, nodding his head at the utter stupidity he had heard.

_Nothing to worry about, _my mind summed up the situation. I gave myself a shrug, not seeing the point in actually witnessing whatever it was that was happening. I turned around and resumed my former course.

* * *

><p>Cowering behind a small group of boulders, which worked effectively as a natural fortress, I tilted and turned the hammer from a considerable distance, watching the small reflection of light

imprint itself upon the damp soil before being abruptly mugged by the vicious Night Fury that lived in the surrounding domain.<p>

As the position of the hammer changed, the tiny glint of reflected light did so too. The dragon shifted its stature, attempting to stealthily approach its target before pouncing on it.

Yet another fail; but the beast wasn't ready to give up yet.

I adjusted the position of the reflection, and the dragon hastily chased after it, clueless to the pulling of strings behind such devious act.

Suddenly, the dragon paused, and it looked up and to me, its face showing signs of trouble. I just knew that it had had a revelation, one that wouldn't turn out so kindly for me.

Really?

His eyes switched back and forth from the hammer to me, keenly observing them with the intention to accuse.

I shrugged with a mean frown on my face, pretending to be innocent.

* * *

><p>It was already early in the afternoon when I decided to return back to town, wanting to quickly craft something in the smithy. Chief Olrik's ships were already leaving, having just left the mouth of the port. Gobber was there, hammering something against the anvil, not exuding the easy-come, easy-go attitude that he usually does.<p>

"So what happened?" I asked curiously.

"Apparently he's lookin' for yer father. He's followin' him to Helheim's Gate," he said frustratingly.

"Why?" I squeaked.

I received no answers; nothing but complete silence.

"Another round is in an hour."

"What?" I instantly contested, as I was hoping for more time to spend with Toothless.

"Change of schedule," Gobber remarked, hammering down against the cooling metal which, I figured, was in the crude shape of a sword.

* * *

><p>Then it popped out of the door, one obviously meant for its size.<p>

"The Terror!" Gobber proclaimed in excitement, giggling with glee.

Who the hell makes these names? I thought.

The tiny dragon remained still and did completely nothing, other than hit itself in the face with its relatively long tongue.

Its rather sizable head bobbed up and down, while its extremely skinny torso wagged around to the left and right. It seemed to be shivering, but it was just because of its uncontrollable breathing.

We all broke formation, wanting to get a better, close-up look of the minute creature.

Tuffnut, who had done more than enough to arm himself, observed the creature with disbelief. Then he went on to make an extremely unnecessary remark, gesturing at it as he broke his vision from the dragon:

"That thing looks like the size of my-!"

The unfortunate, unnecessary commentator was violently attacked by the vile creature, which had surprisingly overpowered him with all of its weight, or lack of. The entire crowd of to-be Viking warriors, more like him, Astrid, and I, cried in shock and frightfully vacated the area, while the audience that witnessed our failure burst into a wave of laughter.

I calmly went over to the racks to grab myself a shield, so that I might save Tuffnut from his untimely downfall.

Tuffnut kicked and screamed pointlessly as the tiny dragon hacked and slashed at his face.

I stood in the sun, avoiding any shade that might disrupt my intended plan. I directed a sliver of light onto the ground next to the squirming, innocent boy.

The Terror left its victim as it chased down the light. Tuffnut rolled over in pain, yelling as others had tended to his care.

"Oh! I'm hurt! I am very much hurt!"

Along, I discreetly trailed the dragon and guided it back into its cage, locking the door behind it before it had any chance of escaping.

Then I turned around, having finished my work, to witness the usual reactions from the usual faces.

"He's better than you ever were," Tuffnut commented.

And a grumpy Astrid, her arms folded, her eyes gleaming with such marvelous anger, shot a dagger at him.

* * *

><p>I held a cluttered group of objects, folded neatly in some sort of bag, as I skimmed silently downhill, towards the cove.<p>

I just knew, I knew, very well, that Astrid was trailing me the entire time.

_I'll have to lose her soon, _my mind warned.

I observed my surroundings, wanting to find an area of land where Astrid will have to go through in order to follow me, but simultaneously expose herself to the possibility of being caught.

There, I thought. A small, little, slanted pasture that could work to flush her out. Another quick scan of my surroundings, making sure that this little chase of ours could not be avoided in other ways. There were none I could think of or notice.

I made a dash for it, shifting and re-shifting my arms to assure that I didn't drop any of my secret equipment on the ground. I eased my panting deliberately so that I may easily detect my suspected follower. I continued sprinting, the objects between my arms juggling vigorously, then I suddenly snapped around to catch my follower.

There she stood, her arms flashed out in innocence, looking surprised, not knowing that I had sensed her presence at all.

I stared at her for a second, for the situation, though knowing it was coming, was undoubtedly awkward. I slowly turned away, making sure that I had dropped nothing in this little hunt of ours, and began jogging down a concealed path, one where I was sure to lose her.

* * *

><p> Luckily, I had stored another basket of fish in the cove. It was just extremely timely. I didn't have to lug it around in the middle of the chase that I had dealt with earlier.<p>

While the dragon busied himself once again with the sizable, rotting meal I had set for him, I began outfitting my friend with organized equipment, finally having finished it in-between dragon training classes, which annoyingly drained my time away. Regardless of how tiring it was, stringing the complex system of rope and machinery together, my joy was renewed every time Toothless buzzed in delight, appreciating the meal I had prepared for him.

Exiting from my bent-over stance, I sat back against the cool, soft ground, having shortened my breath because of the peculiar position my body was in. I released a long sigh, and waited as Toothless devoured the rest of his meal.

I looked back at the open sack that I had laid across on the ground beside the dragon, and my heart skipped a beat, jolting over a matter that may turn into a nightmare. Nonetheless, I tried my best to remain calm.

Crap, I cursed.

I dropped something on the way; I was missing an entire roll of rope. I had another, so not having enough wasn't the thing that worried me. It was just something else.

* * *

><p>The strong burst of wind plus the spanning of Toothless' sleek, black wings served to be enough to lift the combined weight of both of us off the ground.<p>

I was taking a risk with this one, as the test was performed in open space, off the cliff in which fishermen would be able to witness us float in the extremely violent gust.

We weren't actually moving; we were tied to the trunk of an unfortunately, downed tree who had decided to give itself to the unforgiving wind.

I flipped the gear which I had my foot inserted in, and it closed the tail wings, while, in what seemed to be unison, Toothless closed his own, bringing us down to a soft landing.

I recorded my findings in my notepad:

Position 1: Smooth, soft flight.

I rubbed the side of Toothless' neck and asked promptly, "You ready, bud?"

He nodded, and I tilted my feet into a different, steeper angle.

The gale blew harder than previously and marvelously overpowered the strength of the rope that tied us to the ground.

Toothless let out a low screech, while I remained silent, surprised by the abrupt tear in the cable. A tumble, a flip, into the trees, and we landed in a peculiar position: Toothless upside down and on top of my legs, while I was trapped face-down, against the soil.

Toothless released my lower body as he flipped around, only to carry me with him as the hinge that locked me in place was jammed.

I tugged at the rope to search for any practical way I could cut myself loose. I found myself no practical solution, so I desperately resorted to my dagger, which, sadly, wasn't on me.

Ah, crap, I thought.

Toothless looked at me innocently, and gave me no insight into solving this little problem of ours, other than:

We could always head to town and cut it with one of those fancy tools, in the form of an inquiring groan.

"Are you kidding me!? No! We will not do that!" I replied almost immediately.

Why? I won't get caught, he promised.

"No," I still declined, nodding my head in utter disbelief as I looked elsewhere for solutions, "No."

* * *

><p>We trailed around the back of the workshop after the guard passed

me with a polite greeting, "Hiccup."<p>

I rose my hand in the air to confront his greetings, acting as normal as I could.

When the brilliance of his torch left the premises, I made haste towards the smithy, tugging on Toothless who had the tendency to wander about elsewhere.

"This way," I whispered.

Hiccup, then, is it? Toothless warbled probingly.

I ignored him, and he took my silence as a yes.

Hiccup..., he repeated.

"Over here," I breathed.

Toothless swayed his head in the other direction as his ears rose under receiving my commands.

From there, I reeled him into the smithy, unlit and dead. Once inside, my head snapped back and forth, nimbly searching for the dagger.

While I attempted to make progress, Toothless, I just felt, wanted us to get caught, and threw a bucket into a whole pile of broken weapons. A series of bangs and clangs filled my ears, causing me to jolt in bewilderment. I darted at Toothless, who looked back at me with guilt.

"The hell?" I mouthed.

Toothless groaned in manner meant like a shrug.

"Hiccup?" a familiar young voice called.

My eyes snapped open wide. My feet dribbled in complete fuss, looking for ways to confront the threat outside.

I mouthed to Toothless, "Stay here," and was promptly answered with several, exaggerated nods.

I quickly dashed outside to where the voice had originated, closing the doors before the wanderer had a chance to see what was lurking about inside.

"Hey! Um...Astrid.." I started, pretending as if I was doing nothing peculiar.

I shifted position, hoping to hide the cable held to my vest.

The skull-draped girl looked at me with an intimidating stare.

"Just wanted to ask...where do you go for most of your days?"

"Um...here..?" I stuttered.

She folded her arms and raised an eyebrow, not taking my answer as satisfactory. She shook her head then turned away, knowing that she wouldn't be able to get an answer from me by being so kind.

I watched her walk away before I made my next move.

I ran back into the workshop, knowing that Astrid would be investigating any second now, hoping to catch me off-guard with my whereabouts.

A dagger lay on the floor, and I swiftly caught the rope that held me with Toothless.

"Go, go!" I whispered, chasing Toothless away.

I hopped on Toothless' back as he galloped into the forest, probably faster than any eye could see. Hopefully every pair of eyes.

* * *

><p>We hung about at the abandoned cliff again, and I couldn't get rid of the foolish smile plastered on my face.<p>

"What we just did was amazingly stupid," I chuckled as I sat down, my knees and legs in front of me. I clung onto them, wrapping around them with my arms whilst rocking back and forth, playing with the dagger that fortunately parted us from remaining together forever, and stabbing the dirt with it.

Toothless purred in agreement, spinning in a circle as he went into his state of rest.

It was a beautiful night, that night. The clouds gave way to the sighs of the glimmering stars in their strange auroras of bright, scintillating colors. A faded, blue shade was painted across the sky, making the night all the more elegant.

I like this blue, Toothless seemed to say with his usual mix of gargling noises. _It's a cool kind of blue._

I chuckled a bit, finding the dragon's choice of color to be a bit humorous.

And your name is Hiccup, _he remarked curiously. _What's a hiccup?_

"Hiccup stands for a great warrior of the town, perhaps the greatest-" I lied, instantly cut-off by Toothless' disbelief.

Right, he warbled.

_Sarcasm. _And he used it correctly too. The dragon seemed to have a sense of humor. As any true friend would.

In all honesty, living a life with Toothless was a mere fantasy. We were the only existing beings that grazed in the forests, and we ruled it together, an area of uncharted territory. He also told me his secrets, his weaknesses. The one thing an enemy should never give to you. So it led me to think: is _he an enemy? Is he

different?_

And though we shared an unbreakable friendship, it was one we kept secret, discreet. And though we had an unbreakable friendship, the truth was, we were made to kill each other. At least, _ he _ was.

So I promised Toothless that night, "I'd give up anything to make sure we're still friends."

And the mundane dragon snored gallantly in response, never having heard my delightful promise. I smirked at the beast, who breathed soundly, the heaving of his heavy chest making up the majority of the noise that rang in my ears.

I dropped dead in the dirt, having been made weary by the dark of the night.

* * *

><p>I woke up to a small rustle of leaves, a noise that alerted me of someone else's presence. The dragon was already gone; it probably knew it was best to hide in the cove.<p>

I was still at the abandoned cliff, and I rubbed my eyes as I questioned myself.

I searched around to look for the noises' source, and finding no lead, I decided to greet the stranger.

"Hello?" I called out.

But after hearing my call, I heard the running of footsteps against the damp ground, each step originating further away from me. I didn't chase after the noise; I already knew who it was.

* * *

><p>AN: This chapter was a challenge, as I tried my best to include a montage-like feel to replicate that of the movie, while still maintaining the overall style of the book (and my own little bits and pieces). So, I hope you have enjoyed this chapter and are wanting more! Please leave a review!

5. Test Drive

**AN: Finally! The first update in a century! Enjoy! ;) **

* * *

><p>Test Drive

* * *

><p>That day, my father arrived. The bells rung in the early morning upon the sight of a scorched ship, then it rang again as the men up-top yelled, "Another, another!" The village began to gather themselves around the mouth of the docks, welcoming the remnants of their fearless adventurers, but with a mellow mood, knowing that the excursion had failed yet again. Sure, this wasn't the first time it

happened, but our losses were obviously drastically worse than ever before.<p>

Seven of our ships deployed to battle; only two returned, along with the rest of Chief Olrik's fleet who had seemed to be able to make it to the battle before the entirety of Berk's fleet had been engulfed in flames.

The gloomy weather was appropriately matched with the situation that the town knew it was facing. There were some distant cheers, thanking the gods that their fathers and sons were safe upon arrival, but there were undoubtedly some casualties. I mean, there has to be.

I calmly marched outside from the Meade hall while the other kids, who I was eating with, ran in fearful excitement. I quickly glanced around as an unknown presence nagged me into doing so, and I saw a disappointed Astrid watch us storm out of the hall.

I remembered: she had no father to wait for.

I remorsefully turned away, hiking to where the majority of the town now gathered, leaving the poor girl alone.

* * *

><p>I waited patiently at the piers, tapping my foot against the already constantly vibrating wooden boards beneath me. My eyes traced two familiar figures: the two honorable Chiefs - my father and Olrik. Their majestic voices faded in as they walked across a flimsy little mystical board that, *for whatever reason*, was able to hold both of them up and not break, only making a faint creaking noise that seemed to be apparent everywhere else.

"...again, I can't thank you enough for getting my men out there alive. You were surprisingly quick in finding us. It's like you knew where Helheim's Gate was already, in all that fog!"

My father let loose a heartily chuckle, holding his stomach as it bobbed up and down in its usual manner. The Chief Olrik also laughed along but added a touch of his own awkwardness to it, nodding with exaggeration. It was forced; it was fake. I obviously noticed his feigning act, but I ignored it.

Another character entered the picture, walking in its usual, outlandish manner that he had always commuted with.

"Oi!" Gobber called out as he steadily approached them with a piece of cargo in his hands.

"'Ey!" my father replied, confronting his best friend and hugging him with a strong embrace, one that would most likely crush my skull into little, sharp pieces.

They released each other, smacking each other in the back once, before finally putting space between them.

"'Ey Olrik!" Gobber said, delightfully waving at the gracefully smiling figure that stood behind my father.

Then Gobber's smile gradually faded as he put his mouth against my

father's ears and whispered to him. The continuous splashing of waves and stomping of gigantic men made it entirely inaudible for me to hear, and the constant passing by of men, both dying and unscathed, rendered my efforts in deciphering what my father heard solely based on watching the movements of my mentor's mouth completely fruitless.

They finally broke apart, and my father, who just seemed to sense my presence, turned his face to me with a small glimpse of an incomplete smile, an entirely one-sided, grim simper.

I shyly waved at my father, raising my hands for barely a second, before dropping them down and clapping them against my hips. I made a bulge out of my lower jaw, making that awkward face that I usually do after my father has returned from a long journey, and released a deep breath.

_Well, you greeted your father, now get going! _my mind urged.

That was how most greetings with my father went. Just an awkward wave, an alienated glare, and I would depart, resuming my former whereabouts. I whirled around, attempting to hide myself amongst the dozens of busied Vikings who were occupied with moving both burnt cargo and corpses to and from the ships.

At first, my mind has set a course back to the Meade hall, as I had been there originally, then I was reminded that I had already finished my meal. But there was just this pestering idea to just go and visit the dragon and _finally _make our first test run. Or a test flight.

* * *

><p>Toothless was ready. After endless days and nights, our training finally paid off. Both of us were confident enough to proceed to the actual test. When I proposed to him such an idea, to actually fly out in the ocean, and _possibly drown ourselves, _Toothless was overjoyed, having more enthusiasm about suspending in the air than I do.

I examined the weather with keen eyes, hoping to the gods that it didn't drastically change. It was perfect, in fact. Moderately cloudy, enough for the sun's glaring rays to be filtered and balanced into a heavenly light. The wind blew gallantly against the giant, cliff-shores of the mighty Isle, and there were no signs of rather dangerous weather being imminent.

We were waiting at the edge of the cliff, Toothless' claws just a few inches from the sheer drop and razor rocks below, as I saddled myself for the unknown.

"You trust me, bud, right?" I asked as his voice shivered with excitement.

The dragon grunted in reluctant agreement.

_Do you trust _me? the dragon asked me with only a stern look.

Toothless walked closer to the edge of the abandoned cliff, his jaw

peeking over the precipice, allowing me to peer at the deadly, shattered rocks below. Just almost two weeks ago and I felt like nothing at the sight, not even afraid of the sheer extent of the giant natural wall. Now, I shivered in fear; the height was just utterly enormous.

I inhaled deeply. "Oh gods."

If there was one thing I could never overcome, it was the fear of doing something overwhelmingly stupid. Thinking that something might just go wrong, but still proceeding with it anyway. Actually, I take that back. Everything I did was almost overwhelmingly stupid. And so was this.

Toothless gave me a look of shame and promise.

It's not that bad, he was probably saying.

"I don't, you know, usually fly," I told him, inhaling deeply at such a horrific sight. "Don't try to do anything impressive. It might just kill both of us."

Toothless waved his ahead about and smirked, a sign I don't really appreciate all too much, especially in a circumstance such as that.

Toothless began backing up, preparing himself for a charge off the cliff. Though he could just violently flap his wings to gain lift, I wasn't one to handle the amount of acceleration behind his powerful, silky ailerons.

He stopped right before the treeline, and I gripped tightly onto Toothless' reins. I began breathing heavily as Toothless started to jog towards the edge of the cliff, ultimately into my rather pathetic demise.

Ah gods, I prayed.

Toothless went to a full sprint mid-way across the empty clifftops. My mind instantly fell into a state of grim remorse as I felt our speed pick up.

"Oh, no, no, noooo--"

Surprisingly, I was able to keep my eyes open. With the amount of excitement and fear mixed in my mind, I was sure I would faint mid-flight, but the need to stay awake and help Toothless fly was what saved me from my unfortunate fate.

But the feeling was amazing. To soar above everything else, especially for the first time, truly flying, was an experience never had I encountered before in my life. My confidence quickly mustered itself the longer we pierced through the skies, and though still thrilled by the very fact I was flying, my mind eased its worries, allowing me to focus on actually testing the prosthetic wing.

I examined the piece of paper before me, reading and observing the sketches over and over again as I went along.

Position one, my mind went.

I tilted my feet downward, pushing earthwards with a subtle amount of force.

Click!

Snap!

The wing extended itself outward, further opening it with a flap! noise, and it fixated Toothless' rather vigorous instability.

The distance between the island and us grew increasingly larger, and I decided it was best that our course stayed parallel to the shore. I needed to turn.

I looked down at the flyer in my hands, checking with Toothless every now and then to make sure all was fine, and planned for a turn to the left.

Position three.

I reeled my feet backwards a slight bit, and a clanking noise followed by another _flap! _satisfied my mind.

Toothless felt this change in position and, with the same mindset as I, banked to the left, gracefully adjusting our path until we went alongside the shores.

I undid my change in position, correcting the wing to its previous form, once again, preserving our rather cautious test flight.

"Okay, bud, you ready?" I yelled through the never-ending howling of the wind.

Toothless shook his head, as if he were just getting into focus, and appeased my curiosities with a calming groan of assurance.

A deep breath, a shake of the shoulders, and I leaned forwards as we prepared for a dive.

Toothless lurched downwards, and my stomach flew upwards in all the jubilation and elation in the world.

My mask of complete seriousness gave way to a sizable grin as we skimmed the waters. The splashing of waves, the cawing of birds, the gentle breeze brushing against the two of us, all complete with the incredibly, humongous-scaled background gave a newer perspective to the world, one filled with excitement, one with adrenaline.

We passed under the columns and arches, big enough to seem as though they were carved by the gods themselves, where even clouds cannot even scale these structures, where not even high-flying birds could dare to touch its tops. We flew underneath such marvels, and I couldn't help but be amazed just by _seeing_ how small we were.

My mind broke free from its little trance, reminding itself that we were still in a life-or-death situation, and the sooner we get this done, the lesser chance we'd have of actually falling.

_Time to climb, _my mind alerted.

We began increasing our altitude gradually once again, traveling at a speed almost incomprehensible to me. My eyes, having been carried away by admiring the island's elegance, caught a growing shadow invading my peripheral vision. It was only then did I realize a small rock, jutting vertically out of the ocean, blocking our path - and Toothless had been attempting to warn me of such obstacle.

Crap.

We smacked into it, but Toothless kicked off the column diagonally to retain flight, losing a great amount of speed in the process. Which, unfortunately, led us to another pillar.

Another smack, Toothless making yet another leap off the rocks, shaking his head grumpily. Our path ran parallel to the shores of the Isle once again.

Toothless groaned with criticism, doubting my abilities to guide the hurt dragon in even a tranquil circumstance. My punishment: a slap to the face with his _godsdamned_ ears.

"Ah!" I cried, shaking my head to wear the pain off. "Sheesh."

I looked down at my paper, pointing my finger at it as I looked for the optimal position for our next part of the test.

"Position three-" I blurted. "Uh, no, five."

I reeled my feet backwards.

Snap!

Crank!

The wings adjusted themselves once again, radiating a flapping noise in my ears, and I acknowledged that it's not broken by pulling subtly on Toothless' reins, signaling my friend that's he's allowed to make the climb.

A giant thrash of the wings, and we began going upwards in an almost vertical angle. And what the Isle thought unconquerable, unclimbable was now nothing but a minute away; the mountain climbed alongside us, growing thinner along as we went. The air grew colder; the clouds were just in our reach. The wind began to be more unsettling, which contributed to the epinephrine that I had so quickly learned to love.

"Wooo!" I yelled, emptying my lungs to their last breath.

My friend shared this excitement, hanging his tongue out of his mouth as it vigorously dangled in the air, regardless of the fact that he'd probably done this every day of his life before he was brought down. Then again: what good is an experience, a story to tell, if you have no one with which to share it? It was special, that moment, because it was the both of us that experienced it, together, at the very same moment.

My grin turned into an uncontrollable, extremely stretched simper that would tear open both sides of my mouth. We continued upwards, and I laughed hysterically at the feeling, wailing all that I was able to wail:

"Oh, the wind in my-!"

The piece of paper that was once clipped to the saddle flew out of my reach, and I instinctively grabbed for it, all the while Toothless stopped.

"-cheat sheet!"

This series of events eventually led to the convenient unhooking of my vest, and though I was successful in retrieving the parchment, we were in free-fall; Toothless, who finally saw me floating with him in the air, knew what our fates were to be, and he let go a deafening screech, one that could surely grab the attention of the entire Isle.

I quickly spread my arms and legs open, trying to 'catch' as much as air as I could, stalling my demise to allow myself time to think. Toothless screamed uselessly in front of me, which wasn't contributing to my focus.

"If- if you could just angle yourself-!" Toothless began spinning crazily, making the situation much worse. "Oh, no, no! Stop-"

Toothless' flailing tail smacked me in the head, almost blacking me out; but the excitement still surged through my body, forcing me awake.

I looked below, and I saw the peaks of the mountain approaching closer and closer to us; I had to make my moves fast.

Regardless of the fact that I had just been struck with a force that ultimately put more distance between the dragon and me, I was somehow able to reach for the saddle. I reeled myself in and put both feet on the paddles before I hastily hooked my vest to the uncontrollable dragon.

I instantly searched my brain for a sort of plan or a first move to make to stall our imminent demise.

The thought that more area presented to the wind would slow our descent flashed by, and I quickly shoved down on the paddles to open the wing fully.

Position three!

Click!

Flap!

The wing adjusted itself yet again, and it gave Toothless much more control. He opened his main wings to its fullest extent, trying to slow down our descent and force it into a horizontal angle.

Which was quite unfortunate for, in front of us, there stood an

exceptional, complex maze of ocean-jutting rocks and boulders, completely topped off with a favorable touch of a thick, deadly fog.

Toothless screeched again, _I think there is stuff ahead of us!_

With only seconds left to live, I looked at my paper desperately, trying to figure out which moves to make first to prevent our ultimate fates.

I looked at and away from the paper, constantly exchanging views, before giving up and throwing the paper into the wind.

I leaned forwards and maintained control of horizontal flight, and Toothless, finding regained confidence from my eagerness, sped forwards as well, to confront the incoming impediment.

And my mind, as unnatural as it seems, was able to keep up with the pace in which we were flying, trusting the instincts that _I never thought I had. __
>

Position two.

Crank! Flap!

Toothless whirled around the rocks, tilting and turning, avoiding them with ease.

Position four.

Click! Flap!

Toothless banked upside down as he flew over a grouped bunch of low, conspicuous rocks in the ocean.

Position three.

My mind kept racing, observing keenly the rocks ahead and what flight plans Toothless was willing to make. It wasn't a guessing game; it was teamwork. Our minds were completely merged with one another - and it was a feeling that I've loved nonetheless.

Position one.

I peered ahead, through the fog, and found signs of sunlight. Soon enough, the fog dissipated, and what i little wisps the main cloud marooned, sunlight filled. The forgiving breeze of a successful flight blew in my face.

My heart was left pumping; my mind was still rushing, thinking that there was no moment in life that would exact to the same amount of excitement that I had witnessed in that first flight of ours.

Having taken a moment to realize our success, I cheered, the great feeling of working so hard on something and having strongly finished it flooding my overwhelmed mind.

I rose both hands in the air in the form of fists, and along with my

dragon, I wailed, "Woohoo!"

Toothless added his touch to the celebration by shooting his signature purple fireball to the air in front of us, exploding in midair and creating a relatively massive balloon of smoke for us to fly through.

Which I, I admit, wasn't really fond of.

* * *

><p>My face felt relatively different after that fly-through, but it was nothing fatal. Only black marks were all that plagued my face, thanks to the kind celebration my dragon friend had decided to pull off. My hair was spiked and unnaturally stiff, courtesy of Toothless as well. And I couldn't help but smell myself. It was just horrendous.

I laid back peacefully against Toothless rather warm body. Perhaps the fire in his stomach was what made him warm, but I could only guess.

My mind traced back through the moments that occurred that noon.

"I can't believe you screamed," I blurted.

Toothless grunted: _I don't scream. I'm a Night Fury; only lesser creatures do that._

"Well, I know you weren't helping me think clearly."

I received no response, and my thoughts were interrupted by a rumbling stomach, my very own. But in all honesty, I truly wasn't hungry.

I wasn't really wanting a meal, but Toothless, who heard the monster inside me growling, insisted, offering me to reach into a basket and pulling out a raw fish of my own to eat.

In front of us already sat a fire, so cooking it wasn't the issue. Truth is: I had lost all appetite of eating after the events my stomach has been through. Free falling. Accelerating. Climbing. To fly through a fireball, the least of all.

I reached over to the spilled contents of the basket to cook myself a fish, obeying Toothless' commands, but my companion stopped me. He warbled with an interruption: _Ah, nope, I got this._

A disgusting sound came from his mouth before finally revealing his lovely present to me: a half-eaten fish. His usual, meal-present.

I stared at the gift bestowed upon me and kindly rejected, gesturing to the fish that I began cooking.

"Uh, no thank you."

It was then when a fleet of Terrors decided to invade our territory, flying from the open sea, and landing as they screamed like little kids. However, they were reluctant to make a move. They all stared at Toothless with desirous eyes, though wary of the fact that he...was

superior...

There was something in the way they treated him - it was almost a form of _respect_, _as if the dragons had a society of their own, and it had its own hierarchy. Toothless, being such a rare, fierce, able dragon, was, no doubt, probably high on that list.

I watched the three Terrors get into a little dispute with Toothless, begging desperately for food that they seemed never to be able to. Even one of them attempted to steal it, but the vicious dragon was not one to lose so easily.

The other two already fled, not seeing the point in all this quarreling.

I watched the last one, readying itself to breath its merciless fire upon its superior. I suppose that even desperation would drive people, _creatures_, to disobey the basic hierarchy, or whatever it was that was at hand here. Toothless let loose a shot of his own, one that was smaller in magnitude, and it landed in the Terror's mouth, right before the Terror would even release its breath.

The Terror fell into a sort of daze, and it began walking around as if it were stoned, like a drunk. I pitied the poor thing, and after watching it for a couple of seconds, walking in its dazed manner, I hesitantly threw my fish before the Terror, who happily accepted my generous offer.

I tried so hard to protect it, and you just gave it away? Toothless snorted.

"You barely did anything," I reasoned.

Toothless resumed his meal as I continued observing the Terror swallow the fish whole. Then the Terror came closer to inspect me, knowing, very well, that I'm not, you know, a dragon. It tilted its head, perhaps in its own form of questionable gratitude. It was like the weak _thanks? _that I would give Gobber when he told me something insulting and used it as a ruse to satisfy my self-deprecation.

Then the Terror came to approach me, and in gratitude, it bobbed its head, which was seamless since its head was shivering and shaking vigorously the entire time.

The Terror then did something that truly struck me. It hesitantly approached my right hand, then, with a dashing movement, it climbed under it, using my soft, gentle fingers for shelter.

My very own fully fledged enemy; not only mine, in fact, the entirety of the Viking domain's. Then it struck me, a revelation so rare, but it was just common sense.

They were just creatures, regardless of how intelligent some of them may be. So, what makes their struggle so different from ours? And ours with theirs? Everything we knew about them was wrong; we misconceived them for the sake of our survival, as they did with us for their own.

I quickly referred back to Toothless, who was making a simple gesture to the little dragon cowering behind my arm.

Toothless' face said it all.

Why don't you do that to me?

"Oh, for the gods' sakes, you're _enormous_!"

_Sooo...? _He warbled.

"The last time I did it, you gave me a hateful glare and disappeared like the wind. What part of... that...would make me think that you would _enjoy _whatever you call... this," I argued, gesturing, with my other hand, at the Terror that cuddled in my palms.

_It was a _loving _glare, _he corrected.

"_Loving_," I repeated in a sarcastic tone, throwing my unoccupied hand into the air, rolling my eyes in disbelief.

_Besides, look where _you _are now, _he said.

I had to agree. Ever since he came, life had instantly become better, both in and out of the arena. I turned from infamous to becoming a proclaimed great heir of my father's glorious town. There was almost no possible way _things could go wrong. _

But I really did push my luck.

* * *

><p>I later learned, after I arrived back home from my test flight, that only the majority of the men were injured. None of them died; only their ships sank. They were left on an isolated island that jutted out of the ocean in the middle of the barren sea, somewhere not even close to Helheim's Gate. It was only when Olrik's fleet appeared were they able to leave their ambiguous situation, fighting fire-breathing monsters all day, and even night, without even resting. Certainly a situation I'd _love _to be in.

I walked around the town, observing the line of wounded men who lay down against the wooden benches of their improvised infirmary. Originally, it was the dining area of the Meade hall, but I_ guess_ it was more important to tend to the wounded. The majority had scorched, rotten bodies, and they reeked of an odor I had never smelled before. They groaned in agony; but they were concise, they were almost unnoticeable. They were Vikings; only lesser people would submit to the cries of pain.

I pitied them, but their wounds were not serious at all, not for the masterful two-limbed monster, that is. Gobber was deft in the field of recovery; these men would be better than ever once they were back on their feet. Regardless, they all probably had suffered worse.

I was oblivious to the half-drunken man in front of me, too busy staring at the lifeless bodies with _deep_ interest and slight disgust, hence causing me to bump into him. He whipped around in utter anger, almost having no reason to be so agitated.

"What the hell is your problem?" he asked ferociously, causing me to jump back a bit in surprise. He eyed me for a second before he grew

with interest. "Oh, you."

"Sorry, uh, sir," I apologized, attempting to escape the wrath of the most-probably tipsy man. I made my way around him, but he stepped aside and into my path once again, then he violently shoved me backwards.

"A filth like you surely don't deserve rank champion." He pointed his axe at my neck and nudged at me. "Get lost!"

_Isn't that I'm trying to do!? _my mind wanted to bark.

I referred back to his previous statement and observed the lack of consistency in his comments. He was _definitely _drunk.

Yet another savage thrust, and I almost lost balance. I regained my former stance and wiped off the dirt from my palms from having used it as support. The old man began to approach me again.

A distant voice called out to save me from further abuse.

"Leave him to be, Orgrid! He's the town's champion! The chief won't be quite happy if he sees you doing this."

The drunk switched eyes between the other men and me, and began his amble towards his old, worn down home, muttering, "He ain't gonna be one for long."

I slightly squinted my eyes at those very last set of words, and it set off a silent alarm that rang in my head endlessly. But it barely bothered me - it was just that everlasting nagging in my head to investigate more in what he meant in those words. The easiest, most logical conclusion was that he was just plain _out of his mind, _due to his unbroken love for shoving down entire mugs of alcohol down his throat, but I couldn't help but wonder.

He ain't gonna be one for long.

What the heck does that mean?

* * *

><p>I sat in my workshop, flicking at the writing utensil that sat in front of me, over and over, watching it roll back to its owner only to be flicked again by small, nimble fingers.<p>

My mind was completely blank as to what I should do, so I remained where I was, attempting to brainstorm.

A gentle rumbling, a series of bangs, and the sudden bursting of the door made me jump to my feet, surprised by the unexpected visitor. I began rubbing my eyes as I spoke, not even verifying who my visitor is and just assuming that it was Gobber.

"Woah! At least knock th- bef-"

As I adjusted my eyes and brought them back to focus, my father appeared before me, and I quickly corrected my informal response.

"Hey!...Dad."

I stood awkwardly across the room from him, conveniently, and perfectly, hiding the accurately depicted drawings of a Night Fury behind my twig-like body.

I observed his face: he was serious, very serious, but there was a slight hint of joy.

"Why have you been hiding things from me?"

He slowly stepped closer to me, and I began to desperately bunch up my sketches together, hoping that he'd get a lesser view of them.

"Just how did you think I wasn't going to find out? Nothing happens on this island without me knowing."

Ah, crap.

"I was...was going to tell you. But...uh..gods...damnit!" I stuttered.

A giant step forward, then he embraced me dearly, constricting my lungs to the point where I couldn't breathe anymore. I groaned in slight pain, but my mind was far more worried with confusion.

"I knew you had it! You had it in you!"

A voice so cheerful; was he talking about what I was thinking he was talking about? I was extremely dumbfounded: What!?

"I knew it! I heard the stories: beating a Gronckle to its death! Haha!"

To sleep, my mind wanted to correct.

He finally released me after shaking me around violently and shoved me back as I dropped onto my seat. Then he pulled up a chair of his own and crushed it under his enormous weight, eyeing me carefully as he asked in a calmer manner.

"So, why were you waiting all this time?"

"Yeah, ah..." I struggled to answer.

Perhaps I was too obvious in hiding things, because my hands and arms were all over the place, attempting to cover my sketches. The radical presence of my limbs brought my father's attention to them, and he asked, "What's that?"

He took a better look at them and found out: they were drawings of dragons.

My mind stopped for a second, and I felt a bit light-headed as I mentally scrambled to search for a valid answer.

"Oh! Umm...I was observing dragons, looking for weaknesses, you know! So we can just..." I gestured a movement of a dagger inside a dragon's body, and tried representing a violent slaughtering of the

poor, imaginary beast. "...kill it!"

"You better..." my father grumbled, his once enlightened face now having toned darker.

Then he nudged me in the shoulders with his fist, and he praised, "You are one sneaky smart boy!"

He stopped babbling again and pointed over to the drawings, observing them more keenly, "So, which dragon is that...?"

I looked back and forth, from the drawings to my father's face, clueless and without understanding. Then my mind reconfigured to make sense of the situation. My mind began jabbing itself, piercing my head with a sense of dizziness.

Of course, he never truly saw a Night Fury. Well, _damn._

"I'm...uh...making a decoy dragon. I want to see if they can be tricked..."

What? my mind asked me.

"Ah," my father nodded.

I released a little sigh, relieved that my answer worked. My father settled himself once again, having a look of uncertainty, and reminded himself to do something in celebration of my victory.

"Almost forgot," he reached for something in his vest pocket, and pulled out a golden necklace. He hung it about in front of my face, waving it as he spoke. It was a circle, imprinted with the faded, somewhat rusted silhouette of a dragon, breathing fire out of its mouth. Almost like our banner; however, this one was different. There was no arrow streaking across its torso, no ax or sword slicing through its lungs. It was just the majestic winged creature.

"It's your mother's. She gave it to your...brother, and I found it after he..you know. I promised I'd keep you...uh...safe from danger."

Brother...yeah, _I had a brother. He disappeared, mysteriously, just like my mother. Long gone. The only thing I remembered about him was that he was a lot like me - scrawny, same hair... well, he was also much more capable... in _everything_, practically. Anyway, he was presumed dead, and I had to get used to the fact, which I did. It was just _weird_ to see that, my brother, my mother as well, still had a few personal belongings lying around, and that my father had kept a few of them from me. A sort of physical representation of what's left of a ghost, and even I had no say in being shown it.

I gracefully took it from his hands, caring it as if it were a just born child. I twirled it around, slowly spinning it as I took upon every detail I saw.

"I didn't know what else to give you."

My father stood up, looking into my eyes with pride as he was about

to leave. Before turning away, he stopped himself and gave one more fatherly glare.

"Promise, that, when I'm gone, you'll be there to take care of the town."

I nodded, not knowing what to say to my father's rather awkward request.

"Promise?"

I nodded again.

"Stoick, he's here," blurted out a familiar voice from the outside.

"I'll be there, Gobber," my father responded, turning back for a brief second then cautiously eyeing me. "Be careful of what you're doin'."

My father forced a grin as he left the relatively small building and shut the door close behind him.

* * *

><p>I had brought my drafts and plans into my dimly lit room, knowing that privacy was more achievable in such a place. Or I thought it was, at least.

I was, again, pressing my cheek against the cold, hard finished texture of my wooden desk, lost in a deep digression of completely irrelevant thoughts that seemed to have no relation with the ones I had deviated from. I mean, here goes my train of thought: my mother's necklace, the arena, the forest, the cove, Toothless, _running away. _That last topic seemed to appear out of absolutely _nowhere_, and it seemed extremely pragmatic, but my mind kept nagging me on considering the thought anyways.

As my mind wandered off into its own, mental maze, my hand went into its redundant state of constant pencil-flicking, while my other one tied itself with the golden chains of the necklace.

Then the sudden opening and slamming-shut of the door broke me free from my peculiar ideas, as my curiosity forced me to pay attention to what seemed to be four distinct voices, three familiar and one new, filling the common room just outside my own.

Instantly I could tell that my father, Gobber, and the Chief Olrik were in a deep conversation with another, unknown figure. I continued laying my head against the desk, not daring to move a muscle as it seemed that my father had senses keen enough to realize my presence just with the movement of my eyeballs. _Just _my eyes. Not only my want for discretion, I just felt too lazy.

Their voices were faded, but, as noticed many times before, they were distinguishable.

Chief Olrik's voice was the first to fade in and be made clear, and I was able to hear it through the vibrations of the solid wood that nested my head.

"...his name is Alvin," Olrik seemed to be introducing his visitor to my father.

"And the King sent him?" my father asked.

"Yes, he did," the Chief said, answering for the silent enigma that hasn't spoken a word since his arrival into my father's household.

"He's on a mission to-"

"I'll take it from here," the man apparently named Alvin spoke, as I instantly got accustomed to his new, also dissimilar, voice.

My curiosity for this visitor of ours made me _slightly _disregard my need to keep a secret of my presence, so I crept up to my door and opened it slightly, as silently as I could, and peeked at the scene that unfolded before my eyes.

Olrik was already outside, making his last good-byes to both my father and my mentor before the door was shut closed again. Then there was an undeniably interesting change in tone.

"What the hell took so long?" my father scorned, glaring a dagger at Alvin, approaching the fire and replacing the almost-extinguished kindle wood with new ones. They thundered with their brick-heavy noises before my father wiped his hands free from dirt and dust.

"It isn't my fault," Alvin growled, taking a seat beside where Gobber laid against the walls. "So, what did the Chief tell you about the King?"

Gobber then pitched in.

"He said that the mainland has their 'shit' together and are waiting for the King?"

Alvin gave him a look of disbelief, while my father scowled calmly.

"Then what? What is it that you _do _know?"

"There is _no _King. In fact, they're thinking of raiding all of _us _tribes in the North to search for him."

My father couldn't believe what he was hearing, and Gobber stood still, cool as a dead fish. He darted at Alvin, then Gobber, scoffing in a sort of unbelievable laughter.

"Yeah, I know. Us Vikings are unimaginably stupid," Alvin agreed.

"And what's your job supposed to be?"

"Well, the actual...person...that the supposed King has sent, I stalled him. His job was to see if anyone was affiliated with dragons. If anyone could at least _defeat _the dragons."

My father sighed, and looked briefly at Gobber before turning back at

the announcer.

"The...King figured that He's coming about tomorrow. I should leave tonight. In discretion of course."

"Well, I'm sure you can manage that," my father said carelessly, whirling around yet again, pondering on his future actions.

"It's expected that the King will flush out any of Va-"

"Don't you say her name," my father was able to stop him before I could make out what he said.

Alvin gave him a cautious stare, and altered his choice of words before proceeding with even more information.

"He's looking for _her _kind. I mean, with the dragons up and about, raiding every godsdamned Viking tribe or village that's out there, any sort of person who such as her would make him the most powerful ruler in the North, if not the world!"

My father took a moment to indulge the information in silence.

Meanwhile, my mind whirled. Who was _she? _And what the hell was _her kind?_

"Anyways," Alvin continued, "even if there are no characters of such... then they'll just pick the winner of the elimination-thingy that many tribes seem to do."

My father nodded in boy understanding and approval of the information, clearly knowing the situation at hand, the complete polar opposite of my end.

"Does the King know of Helheim's Gate? Where it is? What it looks like?" he asked suddenly, breaking free from a trance and whirling around.

"I think so."

"What about Chief Olrik? Is he workin' with the King?"

"Yes.."

"What in name of-" my father blurted out, calming himself down before his rage would reach that of an inconsolable status.

"He's under... pressure, I guess. He's on your side is all I know."

_There are sides now, _my mind noted.

"Then why would he say he exiled _us _out of kind of heart? What, _exactly_, is he trying to achieve here?"

He swirled around, yet again, and buried his face in his hands, which gently stroke upwards and through his hair, sighing.

"Because you two are close-as-hell friends, and the King did mention searching the entirety of this so-called coalition of yours..."

My father turned a glare at Alvin upon hearing the reluctance in his voice.

"..so exiling you would be the best attempt at leaving you out of this mug-of-a-mess."

"Mug-of-a-mess," Gobber repeated light-heartedly. "I forgot, you still say stupid things."

Alvin shrugged and gave the half-man a grim smile, before he leaned forwards and tied his hands together.

"Let me guess - it failed?" my father asked.

"Well, obviously," Alvin replied. "Hence, the King still sent his men..."

My father then sprung with a sudden revelation and asked Gobber, "Is Hiccup going to the finals?"

"Ah, yes. I thought you knew this. Why? What's the worr-"

My father glared at him for a second.

"Oh, right..." his trailed off, his head stooping forwards in uncertainty. "I don't know what to say Stoick. The boy's been workin' hard, and he's definitely eager to finish this. You can't stop him. You can _try._"

My father grunted in frustration and began pacing back and forth in a pondering manner.

"Wow. This scrawny kid I keep hearin' about is _your son? _And he's kickin' ass out there. He's got the blood in him!"

"Don't mention it," my father growled hideously, and Alvin diverted the topic before any more hostility could originate between the two.

"So, how's the boy?" Alvin asked, interrupting my father's thoughts.

"Worried for him."

"That's you, not the boy. How's the boy?"

"His name is Hiccup, and he doesn't need another parent-figure to sniff his bony-ass all the time. Leave him be."

"Is one too much for him?"

"You better shut the hell up.." my father demanded, shoving a finger at him.

"Stoick..." Gobber called.

"What?"

"He deserves to know, for the gods' sake."

He let loose another sigh, possibly on the verge of stressing out. My father never does that. He's practically a god himself. Whatever situation he was in, it seemed that all hell was about to break loose.

"He's fine, I guess. I just think he's-" my father started.

I leaned forward too much, causing the door to creak a tiny bit. But the three ungentle beasts had a keen sense of hearing, and their eyes instantly darted up the stairs and at my door. I immediately backed up and hugged the wall, avoiding contact with them.

"So he's here? With us?" Alvin asked with a sort of heartening tone.

"Hiccup?" my father called. Upon hearing my name, my stomach lurched uncomfortably and my head felt as if was about to explode. It was obvious that I wasn't supposed to hear all that chatter.

"Hiccup?" my father called again.

Then the bells began to ring violently, and they managed to penetrate the thick, hard wooden walls with their secluded _dings! _The three men looked at each other at the ringing of the bell, not in panic, but in a state of disappointment.

"Well, I better get going," Alvin said, standing up with a slight grunting noise.

"Still surprised Olrik hasn't noticed you," Gobber spoke back, approaching the stranger and giving him a firm hug.

A pat on the back, then Alvin said, "Keep good care of 'im, will ya? I'd like to see his face when this is all over."

They released themselves, and this time, my father confronted the visitor.

"Soon I hope," he said, holding out his hand. "I'd like to have a remainder of my family left alive."

Alvin accepted his offer and firmly grasped it, shaking it.

I closed my door gently, having it creak seemingly-loudly as it finally locked itself in place. I slumped myself back into my stiff, wooden chair and pondered upon the conversation in which I had luckily successfully eavesdropped on.

I didn't even know what to think of it, honestly. Spoke of this woman...spoke of some sort of "King" which my father would always tell me stories about, describing him as being "out of his godsdamned mind, " and he peculiarly knows too much about a King's life. And I think he almost referred to him as a brother? Perhaps Gobber's'? I don't know. Most importantly, who was that Alvin person? And speaking of "affiliated with dragons"? Dragon trappers are a rare sight, but they're not unheard of, so that may be _that. _I made a quick attempt to clear my mind, reminding myself that it was nothing but "diplomacy

and politics, whatever Chiefs do in their free time." I shrugged it off.

I picked up my pencil again, and I decided to draw more of other dragons I had managed to recall with my interactions with them - more specifically, the Terror. My mind got to work as the house gently shook upon the sound of a thud - the usual violent manner in which the door would be closed by bone-crushing men.

That night, my father never talked to me, never discussed with me the things I had managed to digest with absolutely minimal to no understanding. And though my curiosity remained unquenched, I saw no need to bother him about the same subject, so I let it loose.

I guess I was ignorant. And it's a fool's errand to be ignorant, for ignorance always pays. And I had it coming.

6. Wishes and Brothers

****Wishes and Brothers****

* * *

><p>"Stoick!" A deep bellow rang throughout the common room, and was then made faded by the door that sealed my own private accommodation.<p>

My father was most probably already awake at such an early morning hour. It was part of this job â€" and to think that _I _was next in line, and that _I _had to wake up early was just pure absurdity.

I laid in my bed, somewhat woken up by the sudden calling of one chief to another, and stretched my weary limbs as I continued staring up at the ceiling. My eyes squinted at the surge of relief rushing through my body from the pathetic attempt at elongating my arms and the tendons of my jaws.

I heard the door creak open, and my father promptly responding, "What is it?"

The thuds of violent footsteps slightly shook the house at what I thought was the subtle opening of the door. However, my father had not invited the guest inside, which I concluded from the silence that dominated my ears.

"The King-" Chief Olrik started.

My mind, in this brief instance, recalled my accidental, extremely successful eavesdropping from last night, quickly renewing my thoughts as to what all this _chiefly_ commotion was about. Despite my increasing interest, I remained inert on my bed, watching the ceiling _be a ceiling. _There was nothing else I'd immediately do on such a mundane morning, and if such an opportunity to hear even more news from the Chiefs who tried so hard to be discreet (as hinted by their secret meetings and fierce whispering), but failed to do so because of an utterly incapable boy, came to me without requiring me to even work for it, it was destiny at hand here; I was _destined_ to hear this, but I definitely didn't feel honored by this bestowal. In fact, this made me more confused.

I waited for a response as I tried to reach for a speck of dust which was made visible and illuminated by the rays of sunlight raining down from the tiny slits in the wooden boards of my roof, which ultimately ended with the sudden dropping of my extended arms, having failed to contain the dodging lint-particle. Then the following words sounded in my ears:

"The King can screw himself over."

If anything dazzled my mind, it was the fact that these words contradicted the concern my father showed the night before. My mind naturally mentally blurted, _Wait, what?_

Immediately after the spitting of such words, the door tried shutting itself. It sounded as if it were in the battle of two broad-shouldered men whose strength equated to that of the gods (which it was), and the door suffered from the pressure applied to both of its sides. If it were me in place of the door, I would've been crushed like a twig; that was how intense it probably was. I also heard grunting, which went along the following lines:

"Damnit, Stoick! What's your problem?"

"I need time!"

"For what?"

The door finally closed itself, causing a rather vigorous quaking throughout the house. The wooden frames, pillars, and floorboards all shuddered at the sudden end of violence literally just taking place on our doorstep.

"Godsdamned it Stoick, open the godsdamned door!"

A bang on the door.

"I know what you are thinking!" my father replied.

Another bang on the door.

Now, my father was a man anyone could confront...if they dared. But _this_. This _was_ a rare occasion. My father never boarded up his doors and shoved against them to reject someone's presence. He was sort of the _welcoming_ person. The numerous amounts of "Welcome!"s and "Come inside!"s, regardless of how grumpy or intimidating they may sound, I kept hearing were the polar opposite of..._this_. _It_ really managed to get my attention, enough for me to clumsily get out of bed and peek through the hole in my door to see what the fuss was all about.

The banging on the door contributed to my need to, yet again, spy on my father's interactions with other chiefs. It was continually pounded and pounded against as my father, whose figure was not in view, having left the door unattended, went to grab something, which was my best guess.

"I am not going!" a familiar voice originated from elsewhere inside the house.

That was when the door burst open. A cracking of the wood, and the boards collapsed and gave way like they weren't even made from wood at all, but an amalgamation of dust held together by nothing more than the will of the air. The door even flew a bit before landing flat on the floor, the locks busted and splintered like a blazing projectile fired from something of my creation. The sort of chaotic, unnecessarily damaging effect of one's actions that consequently comes because of one's carelessness, which I found totally relatable.

And my father wasn't all that pleased when he came storming back into view to see what it was that had made such a prominent, abnormal sound. He stared emptily at the scene before him, and the Chief Olrik stood among it all, somewhat guilty about the mess he had made.

"What...did...you...just...do?" my father asked.

Chief Olrik spread his arms wide and proceeded to respond with false innocence.

"Look here...your door was quite weak."

"My door was quite weak?" my father repeated.

"Well, it's just made out of wood..."

"My gods...does 'I am not going' mean anything to you? Well, if not, let me clarify a few things for you. It means exactly what it means: _I am not going._"

My father approached the torn down door as he broke his vision from the Chief and knelt down to observe the severity of the damage. Meanwhile, Olrik stood awkwardly about as my father searched among every splinter and shred of wood he found in the general area where the majority of the door now lay. He looked like as if he danced about with the gentle tapping of his foot, somewhat embarrassed by the debris he has created, which was something I would do.

"Look, Gobber told me this. He thinks it's a great idea."

_What's a great idea? _I asked myself.

Then my father turned and blankly stared back at his friend.

"Just because Gobber thinks it is does not make it as is."

"Well, _I _also think it's a great idea."

What's this great idea!?!

"That definitely changed my mind! You know, even Alvin came here last night and told me it's a _great godsdamned idea_!"

"Alvin?" Olrik looked dazzled. "What about that fellow?"

"Wait, you don't remember him?" Stoick asked with a raised eyebrow.

Olrik continued thinking.

"Crazy-ass dragon trapper?"

"No..."

"We fought with him near at another nest? The ice-cave thing? Entrapped hundreds of dragons with his bastard plan?"

"Are you talking about the Alvin that I've never seen for some decades?"

"Yes!"

"He was here?"

"_Of course _Alvin was here! By the _gods_, you walked him here! We've talking about him _right godsdamned now_!"

My father abruptly stood up and shook his head in disbelief, wandering around as he pondered what he had heard. Just the mustered resistance against the Viking urge to grab someone's skull and crush it. Yes, even the idea of honor persists in such a society, and last time I checked, demolishing someone's skull under the influence of pure, blinded rage was not an honorable thing to do. Well, my father was a _disciplined _man, stubborn and stuck to his own morals and ideals. He's an iron rod deep in mud.

"I- I didn't know...no wonder he looked so familiar...but the name...didn't catch me at all..." Olrik muttered.

"Came in yelling, knocked down my door, and probably even woke up my son!"

Then a sudden revelation struck him, and he turned his head facing up the stairs and at my door. I immediately reclined my head from my peeping hole and hugged the wall, terrified out of my mind, but even more curious.

What is it now? Something you want to hide from me? I practically heard everything from the night before if that is what you're worried about. No need to stop talking!

There was a moment of utter stillness and silence. No movements were made; no voices sounded. Nothing but the eased breathing of my chest, heaving up and down as I anticipated for my father to walk upstairs and say something like "Hey, son. Just forget everything I said down stairs" and smile gallantly as he retreats back into the common room.

"Let's take this conversation elsewhere," Chief Olrik later proposed.

A grunt of agreement was all I heard from my father as they walked out the door and shut it tightly. I remained in my room for a few minutes, wondering what was the proclaimed "_great idea_" that both Gobber and Chief Olrik supposedly believed as such. And why was my father refusing it? Obviously, with the lack of context I was given, I mentally shrugged at the idea and came with no conclusion at all. Only one came up to mind, and it was the only one that made much sense for the time being.

Nothing on this island ever made sense.

* * *

><p>And later in the morning, just when I thought things had settled down from that little...let's say, stage play I managed to watch from my bedroom, a hustle of men could be heard from around the lengths of the earth. What else will be happening today? I wondered.

Later, I found out that Chief Olrik, out of some sort of "kind-heartedness," which my father obviously took a part in, decided to mobilize his forces and have them gradually leave Berk and ship them back home. The occupation of the town by coalition forces wasn't a peculiar thing; but to see them leave at such short notice? We had so much great tasting food! A cellar full of drunkard's gold! The town, which was always unsurprisingly lonely, given the circumstances, was practically begging for them to stay. Any sort of visitor, no matter how arrogant, how stupid, how prideful they were, (even if they had managed to exile them out of a coalition) was always welcomed!

So it was also no surprise when half the town, with the inclusion of all the teenagers, watched the spectacle from the perched boardwalks of the harbor. I was there, resting against the top of a bulging, imprecisely measured pillar as I, like always, took great interest in the great hassle known as "leaving town." Up and down the Chief's men went, pulling around crates of random objects and such, a sort of trade agreement both Chiefs started because, I mean, they're together right now, so why not? So there they were, loading their ships to its brim as it rocked about gently in the strangely calm waters of a usually violent ocean.

Even the others' (Ruff and Tuff and 'Lout and 'Legs) conversations were quite graceful. There was no sense of raging war in their words.

"I don't know why they're leaving all of a sudden," Ruff said.

"We don't even know why they're here in the first place," Fishlegs replied.

"Yeah...why are they here?" Snotlout continued.

A frown appeared among the faces of my "fans," shrugging with an emphasis use of their shoulders.

As they went along giving their theories as to why Chief Olrik's forces had arrived just about a week after Berk was exiled (which slightly raised their suspicions), their conversation faded from my ears as I turned back to view the legions of men hard at work, watching the complex mechanics of an organized fleet setting sail. Well, it was still pretty chaotic, given that they were...you know, they're _Vikings. _

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It was because of how settled everything that did I begin to observe the celestial sphere. The skies were tranquil yet again, with a few patch of clouds dotting the heavenly abyss, and there weren't any

signs of an incoming dragon attack. It was...quite worrying, which was an ironic description for a Viking on a day whose worries would be alleviated because of such a relieving fact.

I knew nothing about this unusual change in dragon attacking patterns; I mean, everyone knew them. Weekly, daily, monthly. The seasons and the temperature, the weather and the what-nots. And today was a great time for dragons to just come rolling in, give their greetings, and steal our entire winter stock. Yet, no one bothered to bring such question up. Perhaps it was sort of accepted among the townsfolk. The dragons not attacking is a good thing, so _why complain, _right? No one's going to say "Hey, what happened to the dragons? Why aren't they coming back to eat our children and elderly? I do sourly miss them!"

My wondrous thoughts were immediately diminished with the slight nudge of shoulders. I turned my head to see the face that was Astrid's, which caught me _completely _by surprise. There was something in her look that terrified me, even to this day (not really).

Her arms were folded, with a glimmering hint of curiosity in her eye. She looked neutral, not angry or serious like always. She approached me as if she held no grudge against _anything. _Like an actual, sociable person. She spooked me nonetheless, coming out of no where like some ethereal spirit visiting a socially estranged boy.

"Hey," she started.

I jumped.

"Uh...oh, yeah, hey.." I replied.

"Did you happen to be in the forest when there's the screech-like sound coming from...you know?"

What screech-like sound? I never heard a- uh-oh.

"The one from...like...yesterday?"

That screeching sound was ****the**** screeching sound. The one that my beloved dragon friend claimed to not have done. The one that I, the amazing _genius _that I am, suggested it was loud enough it could be heard across both lengths of the Isle.

My mind felt lighter all of sudden, but my heart pounded abnormally. I tried my best to cope with my abrupt need to fall flat on the floor, and denied any accountability for having heard of this "screech-like sound."

"Oh, um, no," I said, deliberately shaking my head with intended emphasis, "never heard of any screech-like...screech."

"Oh," she nodded in understanding with a disappointing frown. "Anyways, if you know anything of it, tell me..."

A sudden weight lifted off my chest as Astrid began to turn away. It is _extremely _hard to lie to a person who has suspicions about you, especially if something she asked was related to the elaborate artifice you have made up. Especially if it's _very hard to

concentrate _because of the circumstance. Like, having your favored, golden wish in front of you. Or when you know that golden wish was angry at you for stealing her fame and fortune. Or being pierced in the heart when that golden wish asked you a question that could forsake a hidden secret, that could _undo _all that I have worked so hard to achieve, and in consequence, make her even angrier in the process? So, when distance grew between her and I after that moment, I felt calmer instantly.

"Wait," she suddenly pronounced, stopping in her tracks as she whirled around to face me again.

That weight that had lifted off my chest just fell back onto me. My mind sort of sighed with discontent as it watched she-that-I-most-fear (at the time, for whatever reason) approach me yet again, but this time with more caution. Her eyes were squinted with inquiry as she asked, in an intimidatingly interrogative tone.

"Why do you go into the forest so often?"

Well, damn.

I had to pull together a defense quickly, or she would press harder. I mustered all my thoughts and memories, thinking of _just something _that would help me fend off the I-see-you-running-into-the-forest patrol. I was on the verge of panicking, but I was confident I could end her advancement. In less than a second, I found an answer.

"Well, why...why do you stalk me into the forest, hmm?"

I awkwardly held out my hands for a response as I watched her at a loss. Her mouth gaped open, and I could _see _her thoughts all saying: "How dare you?"

Apparently my voice was loud enough to grab the attention of the other teenagers, who, in their interest to ease their teasing needs, snickered at the thought that Tuffnut had kindly spelled out for us: "Astrid's going for the best."

Then came the expected dagger of a glare, which, I swear to the gods, would still pierce my heart to this day. There must be something in those dreadfully angelic eyes of hers. Tuffnut immediately repealed his annoying chortles and held up both hands innocently.

"What?" she jabbed.

For a second, I smirked as well, appreciating the instantaneous reactions caused by the fear of Astrid's wrath. All my sneering did was allow her to shoot back at me, still wearing that same furious face she had shown Tuff. It was then did I mirror Tuffnut's retreat, widening my eyes and darting my head back in slight frightfulness. Eventually, the rest of the group lost interest and turned away, not wanting to anticipate the unleashing of Astrid's fury.

Unfortunately, I had to stay put with Astrid's presence. Attuned back to Astrid's liking, an environment in which private conversations are kept private, she resumed her attempt to interrogate me, still

wanting to have the situation her curiosities unnoticeable.

"Look, the reason why I follow you around is because I want to know how you, someone who could barely swing an ax, became a person who could defeat the fiercest of our trapped dragons with just his bare hands."

Her tone was a bit calmer and not as intimidating. In fact, she felt quite disappointed, probably having to do with having been beaten by the boy whose egregious role had done this town no favors.

"Tell me who trained you, please?" she asked.

I almost wanted to laugh, but my mind knew conceding to her request would be impossible since that person who "trained" me was a dragon, and that denying it would just entice her into digging deeper for the source of my skill, which could either have me caught red-handed or her fried by the terrifying burst of a Night Fury's breath. In this case, saying "no" would be the best answer; if Astrid were to encounter me and the dragon, she would most probably die.

And that thought made my heart faint.

I did consider the option of lying to her. Say no and explain to her that I wasn't receiving training other than Gobber's extremely useful knowledge. And seeing that there was no other preferable course of action, I proceeded with my planned response, shaking my head in disagreement as I replied weakly, "No."

"I'll let you win the arena fight...?" she promised.

"No, seriously. I don't have a trainer of some sort, other than Gobber."

"Gobber? How come he's never told us about scaring dragons with your hands or...you know..."

She shook her head and inclined towards me, making a questioning gesture that I wasn't prepared to counteract. But if there was some sort of ranking system for the top ten creative, improvising liars, I'd be somewhere near the top (not bragging or anything).

"He gave me extra lessons," I replied promptly. "You know, after...um, class."

Astrid, however, did not look convinced. She squinted her eyes at me with suspicion, and sighed in slight frustration, eventually dropping her attempts to have her train under my unknown "teacher." She looked to her left and right before eyeing me for another peculiar second. And for once, I felt that Astrid was about to get off my back, and all would be fine yet again.

Until she sneered and proceeded to leave, saying a single thing to me before she departed. Something that definitely caught my attention.

"I guess I'll ask Gobber for those... 'extra lessons,'" she replied.

An alarm in my mind went off. When it comes to creative artifice, there's this unexpected consequence in which others will expand on this inventiveness of mine, foiling my plans to keep a secret concealed. Astrid did just that.

I extended one of my arms out after her as she walked hurriedly to pursue our only known trainer, but the length of my arm was no match for the speed of Astrid's long strides. I began forming yet another response in my head, thinking that calling out "wait!" would surely get her attention. It would take me a few seconds before I devoted my lazy self to chase after her, only to be stalled by the sudden bellowing of my name by a familiar voice amid the ever-growing crowd.

"Hiccup!"

I turned around in search of my summoner, as my mind threw a brief and subtle tantrum for having been delayed in his search to find and sway Astrid from asking the two-limbed monster if she could have any of these "lessons," which was probably the most probable thing she could probably do. The "lessons." You know, the ones that don't exist. I doubt that Gobber even acknowledged the existence of these dragons' weaknesses or vulnerabilities. Perhaps it came to the point where I was the only one that knew of these little cheats.

Regardless, I gave up in my pursuit and whirled around to find my father. Knowing my father, it was probably not a wise choice to ignore his calls, especially if they came in the form of the bellows. Sure, it was quite noisy in such a busy environment, but my father's voice trumps all. I bet he could even whisper, and those at the edges of the earth could still hear him. So when he bellowed loud enough for even mountains to quiver in fear and respect, I had to attend to his presence.

I sliced through the passes and crevices in between the maze of overgrown bellies and bulging torsos, only managing to squeeze through before suffocating to death in the middle of the crowd, who were half going about in their day and half watching Chief Olrik's men load themselves onto their boats. It was only after a minute of struggling through the gathering did I finally see my father discussing with other men anything about which a normal Viking talks. There he was, bellowing with a palm on his belly, chuckling heartily over a joke he might have just heard, or any sort of humor that only mature people get. I approached him under the impression that he called for me, because I definitely heard my name. And I definitely heard his voice.

"Hey, did you call for me?" I sort of squeaked.

"Huh? What is it son?" my father replied, having broken his conversation to attend to me.

"Di-did you call for me?" I blinked and asked again, this time with more reluctance.

"No, no, I don't think I did..."

I swear I heard him calling me!

Perhaps it was one of those times where your name can sound like many other...sounds...that it reaches the point where any...sound...can sound like your name. The likeliness of "Hiccup" in comparison to any other background noise could or could not be perceived as sounding similar; point being is that I thought I heard someone calling my name, but in fact, my name was not even called at all.

And that _slightly _infuriated me since the nothingness that had to manifest a voice of its own and magically call out my name had caused the ending of efforts to prevent Astrid from possibly cause growing suspicions of my success in the arena, from Gobber specifically. Well, I was pretty sure that people have a few questions regarding my sudden ability to down dragons with my bare hands. There definitely were a few questions asked there, or perhaps when I had spooked a Zippleback with the "picture of my deadly, able palms," as so kindly put by some orators of the town. But I'm willing to bet that they wouldn't even question it.

No one would bother to be like: "Hey, that little whimsy boy, who will be our future Chief, can actually fight for once! Where did he get that ability?" In actuality, they would be more prone to yell: "Hell yes, that kid can fight!" Or simply "fight!"

Anyways, after throwing yet another brief and subtle tantrum in my head, I waved my goodbyes to my dad and his fellow Viking friends before I began to depart from that awkward encounter. It was only then did I notice the swift movement of a man approaching my father and suspiciously whispering into his ear, which had managed, out of the billions of peculiar events and objects and what-nots of this forsaken town, to catch my eye.

_What is it this time? _my mind asked.

My mind urged me to incline with interest, to eavesdrop as I had successfully done so many other times. But with the constant chatter among the Viking crowd and the near-proximity I'd have to achieve in order to be able to pry auspiciously being near impossible to maintain, I took no chances and watched from a distance. My father's face, which I was able to observe, configured from that exuding a joyous mood to that of a rather concerning one. His eyebrows sloped towards their symmetrical axis and a not-so-pleasant frown was apparent on his frontal guise. The messenger reclined his head as he patiently eyed my father for a reply of some sort.

A single nod, and the anonymous courier signaled a figure perched on some sort of towering surface. It was obvious since the mediator angled his head upwards and squinted his eyes to adjust to the extreme illumination of the sun, which, though not directly shining into his line of sight, was somewhat near the character he was looking at, I was able to observe. I mimicked the messenger's stance and searched for receiver of this signaling.

But my probing was no longer needed as the sudden ringing of bells echoed through my ears, and accompanying such sounds was the crying of an announcer: "Another fleet! Another fleet!"

At this notice did I become enraptured with curiosity, wanting to lean forwards and over the edges of the cliff to make out the just-visible silhouettes of yet another fleet of ships which the announcer had alluded us to. However, they were not flying any

familiar colors. Not Chief Olrik's, not the other local tribes'. But then again, they weren't exotic. They were just seldom seen. I can recall these flags from the "history 'books'" that Gobber had so kindly loaned to me. They were of mainland significance, and from the stories that my father had told me more than several times, they were well-built and were far more advanced than any of our ships.

My father, who was able to just peer through the distant mild fog that plagued the far edges of the horizons and make-out the ships, whirled around with slight agitation. His eyes bulged out of his skull as he stared down at me with meager dismay. But he remained constituted of his overwhelming (and honestly mundane) sense of "honor and bravery" stuff that I had yet to find in myself, and looked down at me with something to say.

"I don't want you near the docks by the time they arrive. Only come back once they are settled here."

_Wait, why? _my mind questioned, though I was pretty sure that mental inquiries cannot be conveyed through any sort of mental-courier method, and hence my father wouldn't be able to perceive and respond.

Well, he actually was able to because my face sort of squinted its eyes in slight confusion and tilted with a suggestive bearing that I was questioning in orders. But he was not willing to completely answer me yet and instead, enforced his previous demands.

"Just go home, into the forest, _somewhere but here._"

The forest! That's not such a bad ideaâ€¦|

I budged slightly, caught in the nets of curiosity and the tormenting urge to visit Toothless, stopping myself after having told my mind that heading into the forest was not such a bad idea after all. On a plot of land so small, the only exciting things were greeting visitors and killing dragons, though the former was more preferable. So when I was in the middle of a decision, specifically between greeting a dragon and watching tensions arise between several Chiefs or whatever, which was quite _unusual _and a change in pace (finally), my mind remained dead empty, not swaying to either side of the situation.

Not until my father stepped in, of course.

"Hiccup!"

I flinched at the eruption of his voice, which I greatly feared. And my mind, accompanied with my father's opinion, used the "but Toothless is there" argument, which I found almost untenable, and I decided to go along anyways. I nodded my head once before whirling around and allowing myself to be consumed by the crowd, still worrying about Astrid's current whereabouts.

My mind, being the optimistic thinker it always has been, scrolled through the list of possible "worst" outcomes, and I sighed and panicked (slightly) more as each conclusion came to be as I occasionally bumped into the stomachs or arms of fellow townsfolk, who were also anticipating what was to come, but for them, their concern was the incoming fleet of ships. Everyone's mind was

occupied, but I was more worried about myself.

There was no space for my mind to rest. Everyday, there was this new enigma of some sort, whether it be some fleet of ships, some random quarreling involving your usually "calm" father, or the never-easing tension regarding the possibility of exposing the fact that I had befriended a dragon. That was the worst part. Them finding out I had allied myself with a dragon. There was no sort of law forbidding such friendship, but it just disrupted our cultural identity as "idiots who slay dragons." I almost thought life had gotten better, but it's no longer "I have to prove myself;" it's more like "_what the hell is going on?" _

But like the many other times before, I have always managed to prevent people from approaching the conclusion that I was some sort of dragon befriend-er. So I gambled with the probability of such occurring yet again being likely, so when I had approached the defining line between untamed trees and the mighty Viking's land, I gave myself a subtle mental shrug, said, "No worries," and proceeded to enter the shade-draped expanse.

* * *

><p>We had another successful test, and Toothless, who originally wanted to "rest by the gentle waters," finally decided to head back to the cove, which I was extremely grateful for. Hanging about at the shores was definitely not a great spot to conceal a rather large, black-scaled dragon fitted with obviously human-crafted objects, eating fish with a scrawny, young boy whose reputation, for the time being, exceeded any other youth's. Such a sight would definitely raise some eyebrows and questions, as well as answering those involving the suddenness of my success in the arena, assuming that the fishermen had such deduction capabilities.

I sat against a cool, hard boulder, resting my aching back after an hour of constant flying, which thankfully lacked the consistencies of having to get into a state of panicking free fall. The breeze swept through the trees sweetly, the distant splashing of a nearby waterfall, and the rustling of leaves played a melodic tempo to the purring of my dearest dragon friend, which my ears embraced with comfort. Everything I need for me to be able to find myself at peace. But Toothless wasn't willing to let me achieve tranquility. I guess it was a natural agenda for all man-eating dragons.

What's that? he asked, nudging my shoulder with utmost curiosity, referring to the necklace in my hands, the one my father had given to me yesterday.

I was trawling a necklace and lacing it around his fingers playfully, rubbing my thumb against the surface of the dragon imprint on the piece of jewelry, feeling every bump and crevice that made up this masterpiece. I stared at it, observantly scanning every scratch, mark, and imperfection on the seemingly impeccable golden necklace.

I took a second's notice before replying to the dragon, who waited eagerly with patience.

"It was my mother's, or my brother's. Whichever," I replied. "My dad just handed it to me, a little gift to celebrate my success in the

arena."

_You had a brother? _he asked.

"I guess. I sort of remember him..."

It took a second's worth of thinking before correcting myself.

"Actually, not much at all."

_What's a brother? _Toothless later added as a lull hung over our heads.

I rolled my eyes in annoyance, smirking slightly because of the dragon's rather humorous "stupidity" - no offense to Toothless. Then it had occurred to me - the rarity of a Night Fury made me consider the fact that Toothless has never had a sibling at all, or the concept of one was just nothing but faded memory.

"A brother is like...another child of your parent's," I said modestly.

_Well, what's a parent...? _

My mind paused in utter pity; the fact that my friend here had never really understood the concept of a parent, and possibly family, made me wonder even more. I whipped around and looked at Toothless, slightly suspicious that the dragon was messing with me.

_What? _The dragon darted back.

I slowly turned back around and down at the jewelry in my hands, twirling it delicately. I took my time to answer the question, avoiding the use of other family concepts that Toothless probably wouldn't understand.

"Um...the people who...took care of you when you...appeared...in...this...world..."

The dragon tilted its head in slight confusion, wanting me to continue elaborating.

"You know, the first people to feed you...usually..."

_Oh! Yeah! I remember...only one, though. He used to teach me how to fly. You know, when I _had my wings.

I bit my lip, letting Toothless pound against me with his hammer of shame. I could feel him glaring at me, even if he wasn't, and I refused to make any eye contact with him for that moment. I mean, I had taken away his wings and forced him to call me "friend" - my insides couldn't feel any worse. I did my best to stray away from the topic and continue with my own, as the dragon had always been entertained by the stories of _me._

"Well, um, anyways...my brother...my brother is _me. _Well, no - _like _me, but _not _me," I summed up to the best of my abilities. "But...unlike me...?"

I looked at him briefly, and I found that his eyes were staring at me, still unable to understand what his human counterpart has been trying to explain to him all along.

"I don't know...I guess," I finally said, sighing.

There was a second of silence that intruded into the conversation before the dragon barged in with a question with his own.

_I think I get it. Was he scrawny? At least? _Toothless asked.

I glared at him with disbelief.

You know. Like you? he clarified unnecessarily. _A teeny weeny fish-bone? _

I rolled my eyes again, in annoyance as well, and I couldn't do anything else but echo his words.

"A teeny weeny fish-bone," I repeated with an emphasized nod.

Don't you like my description of you?

"To be honest, I really don't. It is completely _inaccurate. _Have you ever seen a fish bone before?"

Um, nope.

I was awe-struck when I heard this, and my head felt slightly dazed by this astounding fact.

"Wait a minute, you eat entire baskets of fish and you have never seen a fish bone before?"

Nope. I swallow them whole.

"And you've never seen one lying around the floor somewhere? Or no other dragon ever spits out the fish-bone?"

Um, sometimes. The fish would be in half though, and the meat would still be there.

"Ah, right," I nodded my head with great understanding from my past, and rather disgusting, experience.

I sort of stared off into the nothingness before me once Toothless was settled with his fish-bone argument, since I was already finished with it on my end. I was attempting to remember what I was talking about earlier when Toothless spoke again.

Anyways, your brother?

I sprung back into focus, reconstituting my sense of presence before I got lost in the abyss of random thoughts and irrelevant tangents. I widened my eyes, performed an internal throat-clearing method that all public speakers would perform, and began with the following, rather anti-climactic response to Toothless' request to get back on topic.

"I...don't know."

You don't know?

"Yeah, I don't know."

You sure he wasn't skinny and stuff?

"I'm actually not so sure about anything."

Toothless sort of retracted his head backwards and looked at me with a sense of doubt.

_It's like you've never met him. _

"Him? Well, I never really did."

Wow.

"I mean, he occasionally visited and read me stories and told me some smithy-tricks, but other than that, he was usually gone for the entire time."

So you do know him...?

"I guess...? There are a few things I remember about him, and I'm definitely sure he has a build like mine."

The dragon shuffled around as he reconfigured his resting stance and looked at me as if I had committed murder of some sort. In the middle of my words, I found myself to be glaring back at him, my mouth hanging open with misunderstanding.

"What? Don't like my stories?"

No, it's just that you're resting on me.

"Well, I've always been resting on you. Did you just start noticing?"

Then there was...silence. I didn't hear anything else from him, and he continued to have those big pupils of mine trained on me. I was somewhat agitated, and I lifted my arms and gestured Toothless to proceed with whatever it was he wanted to say.

"Well?"

I guess I never cared.

"Well, do you now?"

Sure.

"Do you want me to get off of you?"

Again, Toothless withheld his thoughts and continued to stare at me blankly, which I decided to return with the rolling of my eyes and the pathetic collapse of my once-levitating hands. My head tilted downwards and began plucking at the isolated strands of grass protruding out of the dominant sod.

"Do you want me to continue about my brother or not?"

_Honestly, I think that it's quite boring. I mean, you know nothing about your brother. _

"I don't know, he sort of...died...when I was young. And I rarely see him, as I said _earlier_, always on these trips with my mother."

Died?

"Or just went missing...then died. I don't know. He sort of just...ran off."

I squinted my eyes in confusion, trying to recall the events of a rather fogged past. I didn't really feel bad about his death. He wasn't as much to me as my father was, and my mother...well...

_So he just ran off? _

I nodded wordlessly, letting my head juggle itself in its repetitive movements, continuing to mess with the grass before me.

Wow, what a brother.

I gradually turned my head back at Toothless and said something that I probably shouldn't have said. You know, that impulse I couldn't control because he just said _something_ about my brother, who, I admitted, wasn't much to me as...a real...brother.

"Yeah. Judging by the rarity of you, what _do _you know about brothers?"

I fell silent as I reflected upon my words and judged myself based on what I had just said. I instantly felt a surge of guilt rushing through me, consuming me whole. Toothless, meanwhile, shot a glare at me, and I couldn't do anything but helplessly watch him metaphorically burn me with his never-ending glowering.

That's a bit too close to the nest.

I had no idea what he meant by that statement, but I came to the conclusion that it was referring to how offensive my statement was; and if it was a threat to kill me and burn the entirety of my village, I would find the entire situation _understandable_. _Even someone as imperturbable as my father would have no doubts when it came to protecting me, and even less hesitation if it reached the point where he'd have to kill a whole family to prevent my demise. Trust me, he was like that sometimes, but he was always thoughtful about every decision he came across, so spectating these possible and inhumane deeds would be rather impossible. He always manages his way out of everything.

"I'm sorry," I replied, scoffing at myself. "I usually don't think about...things."

Things.

"Well, I'm not so thoughtful about them. They're just...impulses."

Impulses.

I turned towards Toothless with an awkward stare, greatly annoyed with the Night Fury, who has managed to imitate my word-copying-instinct I usually do to ridicule other people's words, and the dragon kindly mirrored my face with an awkward stare of his own. I concluded that the rather often occurrence of me echoing other people's words was what persuaded Toothless to do the same thing.

"You know what? I might as well just leave."

_Oh wow! So threatening! You know what, I might just be dead. _

"And never come back."

_Oh the loneliness will _definitely _kill me!_

"Without renewing that already diminishing supply of rather tasty fish."

Toothless finally denied a response, and I smirked at catching the smart-mouthed dragon wordless. Instantly, nothing but the calming tunes of nature filled my ears, and I patiently waited as my dragon friend took his time to swallow down my threats.

No, you wouldn't.

"I don't know; maybe I would."

_Um, no. I'm probably your only friend. _

I retracted my head back in confusion and simultaneously turned to him.

"Where did you get that impression?"

You visit me all the time?

"So what? I could have other friends...too. I just don't hang out with them as much."

You spend time moving stick on leaf-thing.

"What?"

That white-leaf thing that you have, with a stick you use to make lines on it?

My eyes traveled around their circumference, trying to get a grasp on what human object Toothless was referring too. And there were only several things I would almost always bring with me on my trips, those things being some sort of basket brimmed with fish and my notebook and charcoal pencil. And figuring that the latter better fitted the description than a basket of fish would, I pulled out my notebook and exposed it to the afternoon air, pointing to it as I directed Toothless eyes to the notebook.

"You mean drawing?"

Yes! Whatever that is.

I replied promptly as I tucked the notebook back into my clothes, concealing it completely.

"It's the process in which...you create a series of markings...and...make it look like something. Like what I did with the stick and the dirt, and you sort of saw yourself in it."

So that thing I did with the tree is also drawing?

"Well, sure. The...thing you draw doesn't really have to look like anything particular...necessarily..."

I broke eye contact with Toothless and stretched my sore neck with the relaxing twisting and circulating of my head. And as my spine cracked and creaked, I felt a flow of relief. My eyes eventually ended up gazing at the dragon, who had cocked his head to the side and gave me an inquiring look, which has never failed to completely gain my attention.

Are you saying I'm bad at drawing?

"What?! No!"

Look, I get it. I don't spend my time drawing. Like you.

"It's practically my _only _job! Designing and crafting weapons and stuff?"

_So was that Viking-girl a weapon? _

I choked upon hearing his words, and I felt like I was going to vomit. There was only one conclusion for me to make when it came to figuring out what the dragon was talking about, and it made me less encouraged to continue talking to him. So I did so, and the dragon was quite unsatisfied that I had stopped responding to him and was compelled to keep me talking.

_I see, _he started.

I lifted my head back up slowly, fearful of the sudden revelation he may have gotten.

Is she...?

I whirled around and glared into the dragon's eyes, who stared back with extreme innocence. His ears were raised and his pupils were perfectly circled, which made it increasingly hard for me to glower angrily at him for each second that passed by.

"Don't you dare," I replied once I saw Toothless press forward with a menacing, almost invisible grin.

I turned away from the teasing dragon as I anticipated for the worst, the worst that I could imagine him saying. My to-be and impeccable girlfriend? My hopefully future wife? As much as I had wanted it to be true, I couldn't help but feel shameful for being such a pathetic, ambitious kid, only _dreaming _of things as opposed to making them

real. But the girl probably hated me, as I was stealing her fame, so I had no chance at it anyways. Regardless, I was still surprised with what Toothless had to say next.

Do you wish to mate with her?

I jumped in astonishment, startled by even the thought that I would wish to...mate.

"_WHAT?"_ I shot back at Toothless, who too was taken surprise by my sudden burst of barbaric mentality. "I don't wish to..to...mate!"

Why are you so angry?

"Do you understand the meaning of _mate?_"

_Yes, it's what we dragons do. It's the- _

"Don't bother explaining. I already understand the concept, thank you!"

_Then...what's the problem? _Toothless asked with a shrug.

My mind was flooded with disbelief, and I contained my sudden need to defend my thoughts with a stressful sigh before proceeding to give Toothless a controlled response, an explanation of human society.

"I just don't wish to mate with her. And in a human society, like _my village_, it's a rather outrageous idea to...mate...at, you know, my age?"

Well, how old are you?

"13...years...old?"

So you're old?

"No, I'm young!"

But you said old.

"It's just how we state our age! And that's beside the point. It's still not...a normal thing."

Why?

"Okay, c'mon. You really don't support such an idea, do you?"

Toothless finally fell silent, having no response to my question. I continued eyeing him as he settled his head on the dirt, taking advantage of the tranquility that has managed to stop us in our rather awkward conversation. Toothless no longer wanted to bother with this...topic. I swung my head back forward in relief and adjusted myself as well, repositioning myself against Toothless to maximize comfort.

_Finally. _Silence.

I never felt so relaxed once in my life, maybe because of our rather thoughtless conversation regarding...many things. As much as Toothless relished bothering me with his teasing and bickering, I couldn't help but enjoy his presence. You know, it felt good to have a friend, despite how _annoying _he could be. But I never really tested our relationship. Or his loyalty. I was still unsure if the dragon was waiting for his dependence on me for his survival to no more. I've never found a situation where he cared for me out of loyalty and friendship. You'd expect a dragon to have a _warm heart_, but that's putting things into literal comprehension. _>

The dragon then shifted again, lifting his head to, I assumed, resume our recent talks. In fact, when he started talking to me again, I can't help but feel even more saddened with how Toothless concerns himself with...cultural ideals, as a way to put it.

You're not going to ask how it works at my..."village?" Or how it's encouraged for-

"No, I'm not," I replied defiantly.

I took a second before my mind questioned what my dragon friend had said.

"You live in a village?"

_I don't know. that's what you said. _

"No, no, no...a village is-"

Nevermind. You're just going to hate me for not understanding.

Suddenly, _I _felt guilty, and I hesitantly turned around, getting off the dragon's back, to attend to Toothless' rather sour behavior, attempting to pay reparations for supposedly hurting his feelings. I hung my arms open temporarily, as if I were gesturing him to hug me, and asked for an apology.

"No, no, I'm not going to get angry! You know what, go ahead and ask me anything. Anything you're curious about me or my village."

I worded my proposal incorrectly.

Anything?

"Well, of course not _anythin-_"

Then what's so special about that girl in your notebook?

I sighed, settling my arms against my hips as I submitted to the wrath of Toothless' inquiries.

"I just like her."

You like her?

I widened my eyes in disbelief, not understanding why Toothless just has to repeat every freaking thing I have to say.

"Why do you have to repeat everything I say-?"

_So you _do _wish to m-_

"No, Toothless, _I don't. _What do you not get!?" I exhaled as I hung my head back, all the while Toothless continued.

_I seriously do not see the problem. _

"How do you even know if she's real?"

She keeps following you into the woods.

I rolled my eyes in submission.

"Yes, I know," I groaned.

I continued grunting continuously as Toothless kept on going, only to be silenced by the faint calling of my name.

"Hiccup!"

It was a girl's voice.

See? You know! She's even coming right now! I bet that's her. She obviously wants to-

I immediately halted my unfaithful behavior in Toothless upon hearing those words, bringing my head back up, and directed to Toothless.

"Shh!" I ferociously hushed as I put a finger to my lips.

I'm not really making any sound, you know-

"For the gods, Toothless! Just quiet down!"

The distant yelling came again.

"Hiccup?"

I darted back at Toothless and swiped my hand at him, signalling him to hide. The dragon lazily got himself onto his fours and took his time to stretch, giving me more time to panic as the voice grew closer and closer. I urgently jumped and squealed silently at Toothless as he looked at me with a calm face, his eyelids drooping in dissatisfaction and his tail dragging across the floor.

_Can you hurry? _I mouthed.

Toothless rolled his eyes.

Don't worry. I'm hiding.

"Hiccup?"

I slowly faced the outer rims of the cove walls as I waited for Astrid to spontaneously appear out of the tree line while I occasionally looked behind me to see if Toothless was visible. And,

boy, does that dragon hide really well. I practically lost sight of him. I didn't even know where he went, and instead of easing my inner tension, I felt more worried. A rustling of bushes and leaves commenced nearby, effectively grabbing my attention, and my eyes scanned the ridge before me to search for the source of this sound.

"Hiccup?"

I immediately fell down on the floor and settled myself into a comfortable seating position. Then I proceeded to pretend as if I were drawing and observing the rather concealed landscape around me. Like a prestigious, meditated artist. Then I remembered: my suit. I looked down to verify the only thing that could have possibly foiled my plans at containing my secrets.

Then Astrid appeared. Timing could never be more perfect, especially if the circumstances were against me.

"Hiccup? By the gods, what the hell are you doing down here?"

I stood up immediately and made a hasty attempt at removing my abnormal external clothing. Astrid, at this time, was cautiously navigating her way down, explaining about how tiresome it was to yell my name repeatedly.

"Do you know how many times I yelled your name?"

"Um, an infinite amount of times perhaps?" I replied, spinning around as I managed to tangle myself in the intricate structures of my suit.

"That's a really good guess," Astrid said, as she approached me with a controlled pace. "Hurry up, we need to-"

I spun around yet again in confusion, only to find myself confronting the rather startled Astrid, her jaw hanging betwixt. I froze with a similarly astounded look, awkwardly observing her and myself. My arms were twisted in strange, but possible, angles, having gotten entrapped by the straps and strings. I was hunched over, while my head popped out of the vest through the arm-hole. There was no reason _not _to be confused.

"What the hell- You know what? Nevermind. Your dad wanted me to fetch you."

I adjusted my position to look at her at a more comfortable angle.

"Huh, why?" I asked.

"Your father is putting the forest off-limits. And he knows he sent you off here, where ever...here is."

"No worries, I know the way ba-"

"I know it too."

Astrid took the time to observe the cove, and as she wandered her eyes about, I used the best of my efforts to get the vest off of

me.

"What the hell do you even do here, anyways?"

Then an epiphany struck her, as I could tell so by the sudden widening of her eyes. I quickly thought of a way to sway her attention from a possibly correct realization, despite how small of a chance she could guess correctly. But, it was better to be safe.

"Hey!" I called out, grabbing her attention. "A little help here?"

Astrid turned around and shook her head in disappointment, probably because of how silly I looked. Even I admitted, I looked somewhat silly.

"What are you even wearing?" she asked.

"It's a...focus...vest."

Astrid then grasped on the shoulder blade-things of my vest, readying herself for a mighty pull.

"A focus vest? That's probably one of the most creative names I've ever heard."

"It's a...super useful invention...er...it increases focus and accuracy by-"

Astrid held her hand up to silence me, and I felt kind of offended when she did that.

"I don't even want to know about that either. You and your foolish little tricks and toys."

"Foolish?" I chuckled, deciding to counter her attacks with lies. "It's these little gadgets that made me better than you."

"Wait, so you were _cheating!_"

I narrowed my eyes at Astrid and sneered, mocking her accusation.

"Cheating? If using inventions to one's advantage is cheating, then I guess swords and shields shouldn't even be permitted in the arena!"

"You know what? I give up. I'm willing to get out of here and back into town. You should have seen the commotion when the King's men arrived. They didn't even reveal who they were to those who had no idea what their flag meant."

I looked sternly at her, and Astrid detected the incredulity in my face. She turned away and rolled her eyes as she turned to depart.

"You know the King's colors?"

"You're not the only one that actually _reads, _Hiccup."

I held up my hands in innocence as I followed Astrid's path, enlightened with a new concern for the visitors waiting back at home. I was quite impatient, in fact. With all this rather suspicious talk about the mainland and the King and the whatnot, I was willing to investigate the scene. Trying to find a piece to the puzzle that the chiefs and the important elderly had brought for me.

"Wait, how long is my dad restricting forest entry?"

"Couple of weeks, I guess."

I halted. I rethought about what I just heard and asked again to see if I heard correctly.

"Wait, what?"

Astrid was by the cove walls when she answered again, waiting eagerly for me to hurry up.

"I said a couple of weeks."

I was extremely worried. A couple of weeks. Toothless couldn't survive a couple of weeks without me. No, he'd _die! _A couple of weeks if far too long! No fish. No company. The dragon would drive _mad. _I darted my head back as I threw another inquiry at Astrid.

"Hold on, why?"

"I don't know! Your old man wanted me to get you to tell you his reasons. I don't know specifically know why. The reason they gave was to protect the townfolks from dragons."

"But there are _no_ dragons! Look around you! _It's perfectly safe!_"

I might be a complete liar when it came to, but not limited to, that statement, but the point was it was completely safe. There was no reason to close down the forests. That was such an extremely rare occasion.

"Look, I don't have no idea what your dad wants, but you need to get back. _Now. _You're wasting so much of _my _time."

I hesitantly took the first step on my trip back home as my mind swarmed itself with unanswered questions and completely stomach-punching worries. I looked back, in search of an invisible Night Fury, hopeful that by the time I'm allowed back, or a time in which I could sneak out, he'd still remain alive. I don't want my only true friend to die in such a pathetic way. By the time I reached the cove wall, I was quite doubtful of his survival, which did not help the sudden ache in my head. Despite this, I went along and scaled the walls, only to be pushed along by a rather impatient Astrid.

Only one question could generalize the entire situation: what the hell _wa__s _happening?

* * *

><p>AN: Hey guys. Sorry it took me a while to load up a new chapter. Life n' stuff are getting in my way. Originally, this chapter was supposed to be twice as long, so I decided to split it into two parts. And now, it's two separate chapters. So anyways, tell me what you think!

****BY BERKIAN DECREE: ****

****As issued by his majesty, Sir King President YiddleDee, all audiences are required to write a review. All those who do not abide by this new law will...I don't know...have stuff happen to them.

End
file.